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Virginia

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by Bill Goodwin

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born and raised in North Carolina near Hampton Roads, **Bill Goodwin** has lived in northern Virginia since 1979. He was an award-winning newspaper reporter for the *Atlanta Journal* before becoming a legal counsel and speechwriter for two U.S. senators, Sam Nunn of Georgia and the late Sam J. Ervin, Jr., of North Carolina. Now a full-time travel writer, Goodwin also is the author of *Frommer's South Pacific, Frommer's Tahiti & French Polynesia,* and *Frommer's Fiji.*

HOW TO CONTACT US

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Facts	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids, and advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express
DC Diners Club
DISC Discover
MC MasterCard
V Visa

TRAVEL RESOURCES AT FROMMERS.COM

Frommer's travel resources don't end with this guide. Frommer's website, **www.frommers.com,** has travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly, giving you access to the most current trip-planning information and the best airfare, lodging, and car-rental bargains. You can also listen to podcasts, connect with other Frommers.com members through our active-reader forums, share your travel photos, read blogs from guidebook editors and fellow travelers, and much more.

1 The Best of Virginia

In 1607, the first permanent English-speaking colonists in North America set up camp on an island and built a fort they called Jamestowne. This small band of gentlemen and tradesmen had an extremely rough start, but within a few years this bountiful land known as Virginia had greatly rewarded them for their courageous efforts.

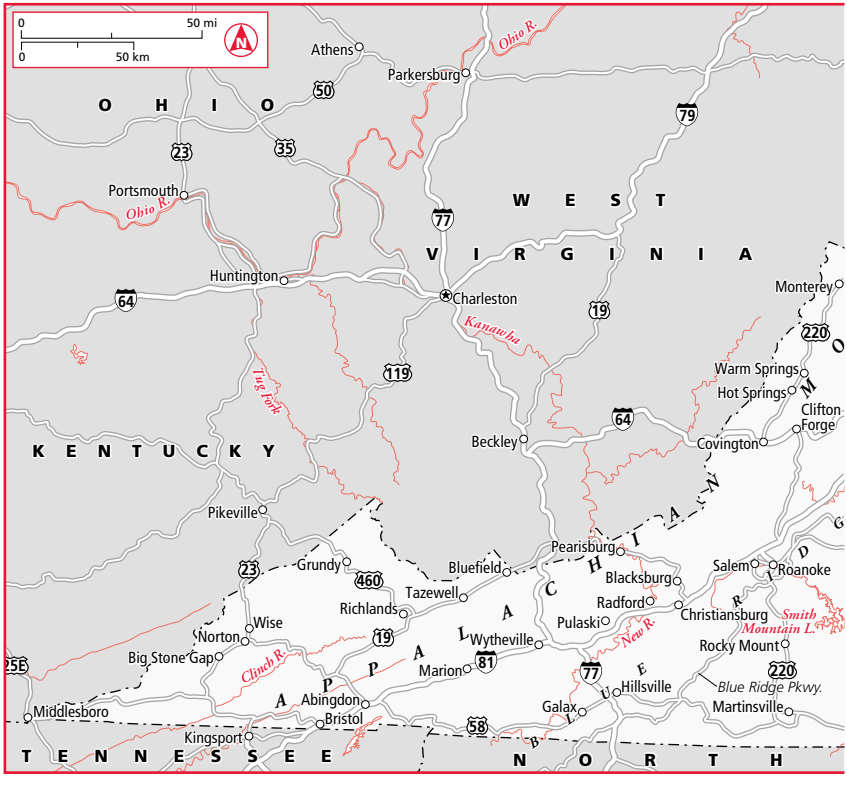
They first set foot on a sandy Atlantic Ocean beach at Cape Charles, at the mouth of one of the world's great estuaries, the Chesapeake Bay. Beyond them lay a varied, rich, and scenic land. They settled beside one of the great tidal rivers whose tributaries led their descendants through the rolling hills of the Piedmont, over the Blue Ridge Mountains, and into the great valleys beyond.

Today, the history-loving Commonwealth of Virginia abounds with historic homes and plantations, buildings that rang with revolutionary oratory, museums and battlefields recalling the bloody Civil War fought on its soil, and small towns that seem little changed since Colonial times. Conservation efforts have kept a great deal of Virginia's wilderness looking much as it did in 1607, making the state a prime destination for lovers of the great outdoors. Virginia has an abundance of places to indulge your passion.

Given so much to cover in relatively few pages, this entire book could be called *Frommer's Best of Virginia.* In this chapter, I choose what I consider to be the best of the best. You'll surely come up with your own list as you travel through the state. Be sure to see the destination chapters later in this book for full details on the places mentioned below.

1 THE BEST OF COLONIAL VIRGINIA

- **Old Town Alexandria:** Although Alexandria is very much part of metro Washington, D.C., the historic district known as Old Town evokes the time when the nation's early leaders strolled its streets and partook of grog at Gadsby's Tavern. See "Alexandria" in chapter 5.
- **Mount Vernon:** When he wasn't off surveying, fighting in the French and Indian War, leading the American Revolution, or serving as our first president, George Washington made his home at a plantation 8 miles south of Alexandria. Restored to look as it was in Washington's day, Mount Vernon is America's second-most-visited historic home. See p. 81.
- **Fredericksburg:** Not only did the Fredericksburg area play a role in the birth of a nation, but it also was the boyhood home of George Washington. James Monroe, who as president kept European powers out of the Americas by promulgating the Monroe Doctrine, lived here before he moved to Charlottesville. The great Confederate leader Robert E. Lee was born near here a generation later. Fredericksburg still retains much of the charm it possessed in those early days. See chapter 6.
- **Charlottesville:** If Washington was the father of the United States, then Thomas Jefferson was its intellectual genius. This scholar, lawyer, writer, and architect built two monuments—his

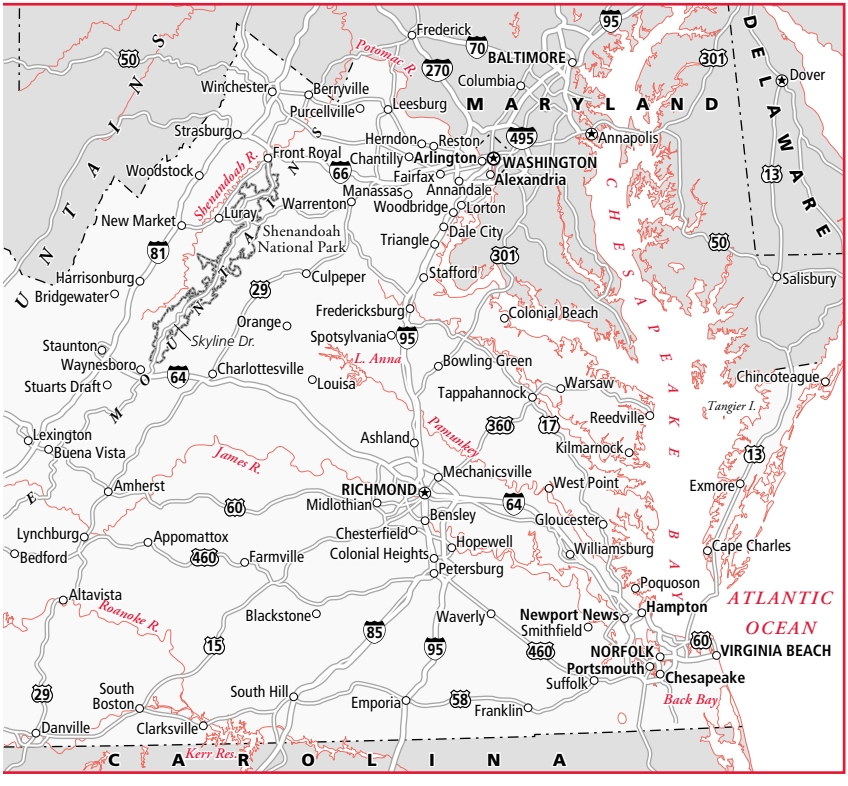


lovely hilltop home, Monticello, and the University of Virginia—that still evoke memories of this great thinker and patriot. See chapter 7.

- **Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown:** Known as the Historic Triangle, these three towns are the finest examples of Colonial America to be found. Colonial Williamsburg looks as it appeared when it was the capital of Virginia in the 18th century. The original Jamestown settlement is now a national historical park, as is Yorktown, where Washington defeated Lord Cornwallis to end the American Revolution. See chapter 11.

2 THE BEST OF CIVIL WAR VIRGINIA

When the Civil War broke out in 1861 and the Confederacy moved its capital to Richmond, the state became the prime target of the Union armies. Virginia saw more battles than any other state, as Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia turned back one assault after another. Today you can visit the sites of many key battles, all of them national historical parks.



- **Manassas:** The first battle of the war occurred along Bull Run near Manassas in northern Virginia, and it was a shock to the Union (and thousands of spectators who came from Washington to watch) when the rebels engineered a victory over a disorganized Union force. They won again at the Second Battle of Manassas. See p. 94.
- **Fredericksburg:** No other town in Virginia has as many significant battlefields as Fredericksburg. Lee used the Rappahannock River as a natural line of defense, and he fought several battles against Union armies trying to advance on Richmond. You can visit the battlefields in town, and at Chancellorsville and the Wilderness, in a day. See chapter 6.
- **Appomattox Court House:** After the fall of Petersburg in 1865, Lee fled for little more than a week until realizing that continuing the war was fruitless. On April 9, he met Grant at Wilbur McLean's farmhouse and surrendered his sword. America's bloodiest conflict was over. The farmhouse is preserved as part of Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. See p. 138.
- **Richmond:** The capital of the Confederacy, Richmond has many reminders of the war, including the magnificent Museum of the Confederacy and the White House of the Confederacy, home

of President Jefferson Davis. Monument Avenue is lined with statues of the rebel leaders. The city's eastern outskirts are ringed with battle sites, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. See chapter 10.

- **Petersburg:** After nearly 4 years of trying to capture Richmond, Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant bypassed the Southern capital in 1864 and headed for the railroad junction of Petersburg, the lifeline of the Confederate capital. Even there, he was forced into a siege situation, but finally, in April 1865, Grant broke through and forced Lee into a westward retreat. See "An Easy Excursion to Petersburg" in chapter 10.

3 THE BEST OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Virginia has hundreds of thousands of acres of natural beauty preserved in national and state parks, national forests, and recreation areas. Especially in the mountains, you can find more than 1,000 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The Chesapeake Bay offers boating and fishing, and the Atlantic beaches are among the best on the East Coast.

- **Shenandoah National Park:** Nearly two million visitors a year venture into the Shenandoah National Park, which straddles the Blue Ridge Mountains from Front Royal to Rockfish Gap. Many visitors merely drive along the 105-mile Skyline Drive, one of America's most scenic routes, but the park has more than 500 miles of hiking trails, including 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Many trails start at the Skyline Drive and drop down into hollows and canyons, some of them with waterfalls. Even on the Skyline Drive, you are likely to encounter deer, and you might even see bear, bobcat, and wild turkey. See "Shenandoah National Park & the Skyline Drive" in chapter 8.
- **Running the Rivers** (Front Royal, Luray): The South Fork of the Shenandoah River twists and turns its way between the valley towns of Front Royal and Luray, making it a perfect venue for rafting, canoeing, and kayaking—or just floating along in an inner tube. See p. 159.
- **Mount Rogers National Recreation Area:** While you won't be alone in Shenandoah National Park, you could have a hiking, biking, horseback-riding, or cross-country skiing trail all to yourself in Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. This wild land in the Southwest Highlands occupies some 117,000 acres of forest and includes its namesake, Virginia's highest peak. Two of Virginia's finest rails-to-trails hiking, biking, and riding paths serve as bookends to the 60-mile-long recreation area: the New River Trail, near Wytheville, and the Virginia Creeper Trail, from Abingdon to White Top Mountain. See "Outdoors in the Southwest Highlands" in chapter 9.
- **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge/ False Cape State Park** (Virginia Beach): You can't sunbathe or swim on the beach of Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, but you can hike through the dunes or take a canoe into the marshes, which are on the Atlantic Flyway for migrating birds. You can sunbathe and swim at the adjoining False Cape State Park, but it's so out-of-the-way that you'll have to bring your own drinking water. See "Parks & Wildlife Refuges" in the Virginia Beach section of chapter 12.

- **Assateague Island:** Of all the natural areas in Virginia, none surpasses Assateague, which keeps the Atlantic Ocean from the back bays of Chincoteague. Here you will find the famous wild ponies in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and relatively tame humans strolling along some 37 miles of pristine beach. Assateague Island is also situated directly on the Atlantic Flyway, making it one of the best bird-watching sites in the country. See "Chincoteague & Assateague Islands" in chapter 12.

4 THE BEST SCENIC DRIVES

The Old Dominion has some of America's most beautiful scenic drives.

- **George Washington Memorial Parkway** (northern Virginia): Stay away during rush hour, when it becomes a major artery into and out of Washington, D.C. But any other time, the "G.W. Parkway" is a great drive along the Potomac River from I-495 at the Maryland line to Mount Vernon. The views of Washington's monuments are unparalleled. See p. 79.
- **The Presidents Route (Va. 20;** Charlottesville to Montpelier): Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe would travel the 25 miles north to visit their friends James and Dolley Madison by a winding wagon trail. Today that road is known as Va. 20, and it's still a scenic wonder through the modern vineyards and expensive horse farms of the Blue Ridge foothills. See "James Madison's Montpelier" in chapter 7.
- **Skyline Drive** (Shenandoah National Park): Few roads anywhere can top the Skyline Drive, which twists and turns 105 miles along the Blue Ridge crest in Shenandoah National Park. The views over the rolling Piedmont to the east and Shenandoah Valley to the west are spectacular, especially during spring, when the wildflowers are in bloom, and in fall, when the leaves change from green to brilliant hues of rust, orange, and yellow. See "Shenandoah National Park & the Skyline Drive" in chapter 8.
- **Lexington to Hot Springs:** Va. 39 runs from Lexington to Hot Springs via the Goshen Pass, a picturesque gorge cut by the Maury River. You can make a loop by continuing north from Hot Springs via U.S. 220 to the beautiful village of Monterey in "Virginia's Switzerland." From Monterey, U.S. 250 crosses the mountains to Staunton and I-81. See chapter 8.
- **Blue Ridge Parkway:** A continuation of the Skyline Drive, this road continues along the Blue Ridge crest south to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. Of the 218 miles in Virginia, the most scenic are north of Roanoke. See "The Blue Ridge Parkway" in chapter 9.
- **Colonial Parkway:** It's not long, but the Colonial Parkway between Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown has its scenic merits, especially the views of the James River near Jamestown and of the York River near Yorktown. See chapter 11.
- **Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel:** A man-made wonder, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel runs for 17 miles over—and under—the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay between Norfolk and the Eastern Shore. You can barely see land when you're in the middle. See chapter 12.

5 THE MOST CHARMING SMALL TOWNS

Virginia's many lovely small towns capture and nurture the state's history and culture. This is especially true in the Shenandoah Valley, where I-81 and U.S. 11 follow the route of the Colonial-era Valley Pike, thus continuing to string together Winchester, Strasburg, Staunton, and Lexington, all possessed of 18th- and 19th-century brick and stone buildings.

- **Middleburg:** The self-proclaimed capital of Virginia's Hunt Country, Middleburg takes up barely 6 blocks along U.S. 50, small enough to be digested in an afternoon. Some of the world's wealthiest individuals keep their horses near Middleburg, and the town has a host of upscale shops in buildings dating from the 1700s. See "The Hunt Country" in chapter 5.
- **Monterey:** Over Shenandoah and Bull Pasture mountains from Staunton, the village of Monterey appears more like New England than Virginia, with its white churches and clapboard homes in a picturesque valley. Thousands of visitors make the trek over the mountains to the annual Highland Maple Festival in March. See "Staunton–to–Warm Springs via Monterey" in chapter 8.
- **Staunton:** There's Shakespeare to be seen at the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, an old railroad town that was formerly most famous as President Woodrow Wilson's birthplace. The replica of The Bard's 17th-century indoor theater has spurred a downtown renaissance, with new restaurants and shops opening all the time. A don't-miss for kids, the Frontier Culture Museum, is here, too. See "Staunton: A President & the Bard" in chapter 8.
- **Lexington:** One of America's best small towns, Lexington has a lively college atmosphere in addition to a host of sights. It's home to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), where Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson taught; its students went off to the Civil War at New Market. Afterward, Robert E. Lee came here as president of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University. VMI was the alma mater of Gen. George C. Marshall, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his plan to rebuild Europe after World War II. Jackson, Lee, and Marshall are buried here, and there are museums dedicated to them. See "Lexington: A Charming College Town" in chapter 8.
- **Abingdon:** Daniel Boone opened Virginia's Southwest Highlands to settlement in the 1770s, and a thriving town grew up at Abingdon. Homes and buildings dating to 1779 line Main Street, making it a wonderful place to stroll. The town is home to the Barter Theatre, Virginia's state stage, where you can still barter for a ticket. See "Abingdon: A Show-Stopping Town" in chapter 9.

6 THE BEST FAMILY VACATIONS

The majority of Virginia's visitors arrive by car, and most of them are families. Accordingly, the state's major attractions and resorts are well equipped to entertain and care for children. It's a great place for kids to learn about American history while enjoying a good time at the beach or one of three major amusement parks.

- **Shenandoah National Park:** Two lodges in the most popular part of Shenandoah National Park make this a great place for family vacations. The

kids can participate in ranger programs, hike to waterfalls, or go for a pony ride in the forest. See "Shenandoah National Park & the Skyline Drive" in chapter 8.

- **Colonial Williamsburg:** The Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg is the best place for children to get a quick lesson in American history. On the streets, they might run into Thomas Jefferson (actually, an actor) and have a conversation about the Declaration of Independence, or drill and march with the 18th-century militia. As soon as they get bored, head for Busch Gardens Williamsburg or Water Country USA, two nearby theme parks. See chapter 11.
- **Virginia Beach:** First there's the beach, 4 miles or so, with lifeguards during summer—but that's not all. Rainy days can be spent at the local Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, the state's most popular museum. Norfolk's NAUTICUS, Hampton's Virginia Air & Space Center, and Colonial Williamsburg are all just short drives away. See chapters 11 and 12.
- **Chincoteague & Assateague Islands:** The fishing village was the setting for Marguerite Henry's classic children's book *Misty of Chincoteague,* and there are plenty of wild horses (called "ponies") in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague Island, which also has a guarded beach for swimming during the summer. The best time to see the horses is during the annual pony swim the last week in July, but the kids can ride one in a small equestrian center. See "Chincoteague & Assateague Islands" in chapter 12.

7 THE MOST UNUSUAL VIRGINIA TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

A museum devoted to hounds, a stalactite organ, an 18th-century version of today's Jacuzzi, a stuffed horse, and a cruise to Elizabethan times all make for unusual travel in Virginia.

- **Chimes Down Under** (Luray): One of the most fascinating caverns in the Shenandoah Valley is at Luray. Through huge subterranean rooms comes beautiful music—in the form of hammers striking million-year-old stalactites. See p. 162.
- **Ancient Hot Tubs** (Warm Springs): Eighteenth-century travelers couldn't climb into the Jacuzzi after a rough day on the road—unless, that is, they pulled into Warm Springs. Since 1761, travelers have slipped their weary bodies into these natural rock pools whose waters range from 94° to 104°F (34°–40°C). You can, too. See p. 175.
- **Mounting Little Sorrel** (Lexington): After he died of wounds accidentally inflicted by his own men at the Battle of Chancellorsville, Gen. Stonewall Jackson was buried in Lexington, where he had taught at Virginia Military Institute. Thanks to taxidermy, Jackson's war-horse, Little Sorrel, stands in VMI's museum. Robert E. Lee's horse, Traveller, is buried just outside Lee Chapel, his master's resting place. See p. 182.
- **Splashing with Harbor Seals** (Virginia Beach): Children and adults will love the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's **Harbor Seal Splash.** Accompanied by an animal care specialist, you get into a pool and splash around with the resident harbor seals and participate in a training session. See p. 308.
- **"Hoi Toide Tonoit"** (Tangier Island): Out in the Chesapeake Bay sits remote

Tangier Island, whose residents have been so isolated that they still speak with the Elizabethan brogue of their forebears. Out here, "high tide tonight" is pronounced *hoi toide tonoit*—as in "hoity-toity"—and narrow 17th-century lanes barely can accommodate modern automobiles. Cruises leave from the Northern Neck and the Eastern Shore. See p. 116.

8 THE BEST COUNTRY INNS

With all its old homes and gorgeous countryside, Virginia is a hotbed of country inns and B&Bs. Some have been in business since Colonial times; a few are among the best around. Our picks barely touch the surface.

- **Red Fox Inn** (Middleburg): In the center of tiny Middleburg, this rambling inn maintains the romantic charm of early Virginia in its original 1728 stone structure. There's a cozy dining room downstairs. See p. 95.
- **The Hope and Glory Inn** (Irvington): The state's most fascinating country inn occupies a converted 1890s schoolhouse, and it has cottages in the garden, but what really sets it apart is an outdoor bathroom complete with clawfoot tub. That's right: It's outdoors, albeit surrounded by a stockade fence. See p. 117.
- **Clifton** (Charlottesville): Thomas Mann Randolph, husband of Thomas Jefferson's daughter, Martha, built this clapboard house as a trading post in 1799. Today it's a luxury-laden but relaxed country inn. The restaurant itself is worth writing home about. See p. 126.
- **The Inn at Little Washington** (Washington): For the best, you need look no further than the Blue Ridge foothill village of Washington, which everyone in Virginia calls "Little Washington." An English decorator designed the rooms here, but it's the romantic restaurant that draws the most raves. See p. 161.
- **Fort Lewis Plantation & Lodge** (Millboro): One of Virginia's most unusual inns, the Fort Lewis Lodge occupies an old mill and rebuilt barn on a farm beside the Cowpasture River, just over the mountain from Warm Springs. A spiral staircase ascends to three rooms inside the old silo, and there are two log cabins with their own fireplaces. It's a great place to show urban kids a bit of farm life in beautiful surroundings. See p. 177.
- **The Martha Washington Hotel & Spa** (Abingdon): Gracing Abingdon's historic district, the center portion of this Greek Revival inn was built as a private home in 1832—and as if to prove it, the plank floors creak loudly as you enter the gracious lobby. You can sit in white-wicker rocking chairs on the front porch and watch the traffic on Main Street—or imagine Daniel Boone's dogs being attacked by wolves nearby. See p. 211.

9 THE BEST LUXURY ACCOMMODATIONS

With deep-enough pockets, you can enjoy some of the Mid-Atlantic's best luxury accommodations in Virginia.

- **Morrison House** (Alexandria): More like a country inn in the middle of Old Town Alexandria, this small, luxurious hotel isn't that old, but it looks exactly like the Federal-period homes surrounding it. The dining is marvelous. See p. 71.

- **The Tides Inn** (Irvington): A venerable boating and golfing retreat, the Tides Inn stands among Virginia's elite resorts. The style is more British Raj than Old Virginny, but the facilities are first-rate, including a spa with treatment rooms overlooking Carter's Creek. The golf course is one of Virginia's best. See p. 118.
- **The Boar's Head** (Charlottesville): A 19th-century gristmill serves as the centerpiece of this lakeside resort, on the outskirts of Charlottesville, and lends ancient charm to the Old Mill dining room, one of the best places to sample Virginia wines without trekking to the vineyards. Modern amenities include a full-service spa and access to Charlottesville's best-equipped sports club. See p. 124.
- **The Homestead** (Hot Springs): Outstanding service, fine cuisine, and a myriad of activities characterize this grand old establishment, in business since Thomas Jefferson's day. In fact, Jefferson was the first of seven presidents to stay here. The Homestead offers accommodations ranging from standard rooms to plush suites. PGA pro Lanny Wadkins presides over its golf course, one of Virginia's finest. See p. 176.
- **The Jefferson Hotel** (Richmond): A Beaux Arts landmark with Renaissance-style balconies and an Italian clock tower, the Jefferson was opened in 1895 by a wealthy Richmonder who wanted his city to have one of America's finest hotels. See p. 219.
- **Williamsburg Inn** (Williamsburg): An establishment with three fine golf courses, the Williamsburg Inn was built as part of the Colonial Williamsburg restoration but looks like it might have been here in 1750. If staying in the main inn with its superb service and cuisine won't do, you can opt for one of the restored houses and taverns that have been converted into accommodations. See p. 262.

10 THE BEST MODERATELY PRICED ACCOMMODATIONS

Virginia has too many fine, affordable lodgings to mention them all here. The following are some we like best.

- **Richard Johnston Inn** (Fredericksburg): Elegantly appointed rooms await in these two 18th-century homes across from historic Fredericksburg's visitor center. See p. 107.
- **Frederick House** (Staunton): A cross between a boutique hotel and a B&B, this collection of Victorian houses is in the heart of Staunton, a quick walk to both Woodrow Wilson's birthplace and the Blackfriars Playhouse. See p. 170.
- **Inn at Gristmill Square** (Warm Springs): A naturally warm spring used to turn the water wheel of the gristmill that makes up part of this comfortable inn. Some rooms are in an old barn and silo. See p. 177.
- **Hampton Inn Col Alto** (Lexington): No ordinary Hampton Inn, Col Alto is an 1827 manor house converted into a comfortable B&B-type hotel. Even if you stay in the modern motel buildings next door, you'll eat your continental breakfast in the period dining room. See p. 185.
- **Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center** (Roanoke): The grand, Tudor-style Hotel Roanoke stood in a wheat field when the Norfolk & Western Railroad built it in 1882. It was closed in 1989, but a $45-million renovation completely restored its grand public areas to their original appearance and rebuilt

all its rooms to modern standards. See p. 199.

- **Summerfield Inn** (Abingdon): Ideally situated a block behind the Barter Theatre, this bed-and-breakfast offers spacious rooms in a converted carriage house, one with a two-person hot tub and walk-in shower. See p. 211.
- **Linden Row Inn** (Richmond): This row of Victorian-era town houses has been renovated but not restored, which has left the rooms with 12-foot ceilings, a mix of late Empire and Victorian pieces, and marble-top dressers. See p. 223.
- **The Fife & Drum Inn** (Williamsburg): Upstairs over the stores of Merchants Square, this charming bed-and-breakfast has Williamsburg's Historic Area right out its front door. For those who can't handle climbing up the stairs, owners Billy and Sharon Scruggs, themselves Williamsburg natives, have a Colonial-style cottage to rent around the corner. See p. 265.

11 THE BEST INEXPENSIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

Virginia has many clean, comfortable motels of the budget-chain variety. But for something a little more special, check out the following choices.

- **Inn at the Olde Silk Mill** (Fredericksburg): Don't be surprised to see Blues and Grays toting Civil War rifles in the lobby; this place is very popular with reenactors. The rooms are laden with antiques. See p. 106.
- **Cavalier Inn at the University** (Charlottesville): The University of Virginia owns and spotlessly maintains this older motel, a half-mile west of the Rotunda, the center of campus. See p. 125.
- **Big Meadows & Skyland lodges** (Shenandoah National Park): With stunning views from atop the Blue Ridge Mountains, these two rustic but charming inns are surprisingly affordable. Just be sure to reserve as early as possible. See p. 149.
- **Llewellyn Lodge** (Lexington): This B&B within an easy walk of Lexington's many attractions is made special by owners John and Ellen Roberts, who willingly share their knowledge not only of the town but also the surrounding wilderness. See p. 186.
- **Luray Caverns Motel West** (Luray): This old-fashioned motel sits across the highway from the famous Luray Caverns. The motel is owned, operated, and spotlessly maintained by the same folks that operate the caverns. See p. 164.
- **Roseloe Motel** (Hot Springs): You don't have to pay a fortune to stay at the Homestead when you can bunk for much less at the Roseloe, a clean, 1950s-style motel across U.S. 220 from the Garth Newel Chamber Music Center. Warm Springs is a short drive, and you can pay much less than the cost of a room to use the Homestead's recreational facilities. See p. 177.
- **Colony House Motor Lodge** (Roanoke): This older but clean and very well-maintained motel is convenient to both downtown Roanoke and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Doors to the rooms have louvers to let in fresh air but not light—an unusual touch for any inexpensive hotel. See p. 199.
- **Belvedere Resort Motel** (Virginia Beach): With the Atlantic Ocean out its back door, this comfortable, clean establishment is one of the last family-owned motels among a multitude of chain properties lining the Virginia Beach oceanfront. See p. 311.

12 THE BEST OF VIRGINIA COOKING

You can dine on all types of cuisine in Virginia, but the highlights are produced from recipes handed down since Colonial times—dishes such as peanut soup and Sally Lunn bread—or that put a modern spin on local ingredients. Here are some of the best places to sample Virginia's unique and very historic cuisine.

- **Gadsby's Tavern** (Alexandria): George Washington said goodbye to his troops from the door of Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria's Old Town. This former rooming house and the tavern next door look much as they did then, and waitstaff in Colonial garb still serve chicken roasted on an open fire, buttermilk pie, and other dishes from that period. See p. 72.
- **The Inn at Little Washington** (Washington): Chef Patrick O'Connell constantly changes his menu to take advantage of trout, Chesapeake Bay seafood, Virginia hams, and other local delicacies in his romantic dining room. The service at Virginia's finest restaurant is wonderfully attentive and unobtrusive. See p. 161.
- **Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant and Bakery** (Staunton): Every town has its favorite "local" restaurant, where you can clog your arteries with plain old Southern favorites like pan-fried chicken, sausage gravy over biscuits, and fresh vegetables seasoned with smoked pork and cooked to smithereens. In business since 1947, Mrs. Rowe's somehow manages to cook great veggies without all that lard. See p. 172.
- **Roanoker Restaurant** (Roanoke): Another local favorite, the Roanoker regularly changes its menu to take advantage of the freshest vegetables available. And every day it serves the best biscuits in Virginia, hot from the oven. See p. 202.
- **Eley's Barbecue** (Petersburg): Like all Southerners, Virginians love their barbecue, and it doesn't get any better than at Eley's, which was formerly known as King's Barbecue. Pork, beef, ribs, and chicken roast constantly over an open pit right in the dining rooms, and the sauce is served on the side, not soaking the succulent meat and overpowering its smoked flavor. See p. 244.
- **A Chef's Kitchen** (Williamsburg): You don't just go to dinner at veteran Chef John Gonzales's table, for he puts on an entertaining and highly informative cooking show for nearly 3 hours. See p. 269.
- **Old Chickahominy House** (Williamsburg): Named for a nearby river, this reconstructed, antiques-filled, 18th-century house is one of the best places to sample traditional Virginia fare, such as Brunswick stew and Virginia ham on hot biscuits. See p. 270.

2

Virginia in Depth

Although I've lived in Virginia since 1990, I never tire of traveling its length and breadth, for my adopted home is a gorgeous land of rolling hills sandwiched between flat seashore and soaring mountains. It's so pleasing to the eye that I have trouble keeping mine on the road. This is especially true on extraordinarily scenic roads such as the winding, mountaintop Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park, the crown jewel of many preserved areas that beckon outdoor adventurers.

While we struggle to overcome modern problems such as urban sprawl, pollution, and unemployment, we also revere a past in which Jamestown gave birth to English-speaking America, Williamsburg flamed the fires of independence, and the American Revolution was won at Yorktown. Some 60% of all Civil War battles were fought on Virginia soil, and one of its own commanded the doomed Confederate effort. Descendants of America's early patriots and Confederate rebels still live here, and the homes, monuments, and battlefields that shaped our country's history comprise the daily landscape.

So well preserved are our historic sites that it's easy to imagine George Washington still standing siege outside Yorktown, Thomas Jefferson still writing great political prose up at Monticello, and Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson still riding at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. Washington's Mount Vernon, Jefferson's Monticello, the restored 18th-century village of Colonial Williamsburg, and the preserved Civil War battlefields are among our most-visited attractions.

The past also is present in our popular culture, for the mountains of Virginia were the incubator for Blue Grass, Old Time, and Traditional country music, and many of our musicians play the tunes exactly as did their forebears. We even have an official driving route to several of country music's most revered shrines.

And let's not forget food, for dishes such as Sally Lund bread and peanut soup have survived from Colonial times. You might say we even *eat* history here in Virginia!

1 VIRGINIA TODAY

Modern Virginia is a far different place than in colonial times or the Civil War. In those days only two areas—Richmond and Norfolk—were the least bit urban. Farms and small towns prevailed, along with their Jeffersonian conservatism emphasizing individual liberty and limited government (translated into modern political rhetoric: No New Taxes!).

Richmond is still our capital city, but our economic dynamos are now the sprawling northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., and the mini-megapolis of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and their Hampton Roads neighbors. Both areas rely on the federal government, which has both fueled their growth and sheltered them from the brunt of the recent Great Recession.

They also have given us our biggest problem: suburban sprawl and the traffic woes that go with it. The economic boom of the early 2000s saw both areas explode. The Washington suburbs have extended

their tentacles west to the Blue Ridge Mountains and more than 50 miles south to Fredericksburg. In many respects we now have an urban arch stretching from Arlington south to Richmond and east to Hampton Roads—or along the corridor traced by Interstates 95 and 64.

As a result, both northern Virginia and Hampton Roads are strangled by rush-hour traffic, which leads us to one of Virginia's modern conundrums: Those of us in the metropolitan areas desperately need to improve our roads and build mass transit, but other Virginians don't want to pay for it. While we gripe about wasting hours sitting motionless in traffic, the rest of the state elects politicians who promise not to raise our taxes to solve the problem. They won't even approve local taxes so that *we* can pay for it. We are stuck between our conservative rural past and our modern urban needs.

Economically, many parts of the state beyond northern Virginia and Hampton Roads have suffered severely during the recession. The consequent decline in state revenues has further complicated matters.

POLITICS

On the statewide level, we Virginians have been splitting our votes between Republicans and Democrats, thanks to a growing and increasingly independent constituency in northern Virginia. Conservative Republicans control the state house; Democrats, the state senate. In 2005 Tim Kaine was the second moderate Democrat in a row elected to the Governor's Mansion. In 2006, novelist and former Secretary of the Navy James Webb narrowly defeated Republican U.S. Senator George Allen, thus giving the Democrats control of the U.S. Senate. In 2008 we sent Democrat Mark Warner, a former governor, to the U.S. Senate, and we gave President Barack Obama a slim victory over Republican Sen. John McCain. But a year later we elected conservative Republican Robert F. McDonnell to succeed Kaine as governor. In a deft appeal to both urban and rural voters, McDonnell promised to fix our transportation mess without raising taxes.

THE ECONOMY

Although colonist John Rolfe is best remembered for marrying Indian princess Pocahontas, he essentially founded the tobacco industry, which for 350 years was the backbone of Virginia's economy. As tobacco wanes, the state is encouraging the planting of grapes and the building of wineries (see "Virginia's Vinos," at the end of this chapter).

Farm income also sprouts from apple orchards in the Shenandoah Valley; livestock, dairies, and poultry in the Piedmont; the state's famous Smithfield hams and peanuts from the Tidewater country; and seafood from the Chesapeake Bay. Industry includes the manufacturing of clothes, chemicals, furniture, and transportation equipment, plus shipbuilding at Newport News.

2 LOOKING BACK AT VIRGINIA

Virginia's recorded history began on April 26, 1607, when 104 English men and boys arrived at Cape Henry on the Virginia coast aboard the *Susan Constant,* the *Godspeed,* and the *Discovery.* The expedition—an attempt to compete with profitable Spanish encroachments in the New World—was sponsored by the Virginia Company of London and supported by King James I.

A MODEST BEGINNING

Although the colonists were heartened to find abundant fish and game, if not streets

Pocahontas & the Real First Virginians

The American Indians who attacked the Jamestown colonists upon their arrival at Cape Henry in 1607 were members of the Kecoughtan tribe, one of more than 32 Algonquian-speaking tribes consisting of some 20,000 people living in what is now eastern Virginia and organized under several paramount chiefs. One of them, Powhatan, ruled over the area around Jamestown and eventually made temporary peace with the colonists.

Powhatan's daughter, the bright and curious Pocahontas, allegedly convinced him not to kill Capt. John Smith. She later married tobacco millionaire John Rolfe, became a Christian, and changed her name to Rebecca. In 1616, the Rolfes took their young son, Thomas, to England, where Rebecca was presented to the royal court. She died in London the next year and is buried in Gravesend.

Although wars and disease decimated the native population, the commonwealth still recognizes eight official tribes: **Chickahominy** (www.chickahominytribe.org), **Chickahominy Eastern Division** (www.cied.org), **Mattaponi, Monacan** (www.monacannation.com), **Nansemond** (www.nansemond.org), **Pamunkey** (www.pamunkey.net), **Rappahannock** (www.rappahannocktribe.org), and **Upper Mattaponi** (www.uppermattaponi.org). The Mattaponi and Pamunkey have reservations with museums and cultural centers.

The Virginia Indian Heritage Program of the **Virginia Foundation for the Humanities,** 145 Ednam Dr., Charlottesville, VA 22903 (✆ **434/924-2396;** www.virginiafoundation.org), publishes a terrific booklet, *The Virginia Indian Heritage Trail,* about the Indians of Virginia.

paved with gold, their optimism was short-lived, for American Indians attacked them on their first day in the New World. Fleeing Cape Henry, they settled on Jamestown Island, which offered greater protection from the Spanish and the Indians but was a lousy, mosquito-infested place to live. They also had arrived in the midst of an extended drought. As one on-the-scene chronicler described it, "a world of miseries ensued." Only 50 settlers survived the first year.

The Indians captured Capt. John Smith while he was exploring the Chickahominy River and carried him to Powhatan, the paramount chief of the tribes living on Virginia's three peninsulas and the Eastern Shore (see the "Pocahontas & the Real First Virginians" box, above). According to legend, they would have killed him, but Powhatan's teenage daughter, the beautiful princess Pocahontas, interceded and saved his life. Or so Smith thought and later publicized; some experts believe it more likely that Smith misunderstood a tribal ritual.

But the colony survived that first year, and soon more men and women arrived, among them some of my ancestors. ("It's true we arrived at Jamestown in 1613," my late Aunt Ola Williford wisecracked, "and we have never amounted to anything since!")

Also in 1613, John Rolfe (who married Pocahontas) brought from the New World a new aromatic tobacco that proved popular in England. The settlers had discovered not the glittery gold they expected, but the "golden weed" that would be the foundation of Virginia's fortunes and its "First

Families," including the Carters, the Hills, the Randolphs, the Lees, and the Harrisons. By mid-century, planter Robert "King" Carter of the Northern Neck was the richest man in North America.

In 1619, the Virginia Company sent a shipload of 90 women to suitors who had paid their transportation costs, and 22 burgesses were elected to set up the first legislative body in the New World. That same year, 20 Africans arrived in a Dutch ship to work as indentured servants, a precursor of slavery.

In 1699, the capital of the colony was moved from Jamestown, which had suffered a disastrous fire, to the planned town of Williamsburg. It was from Williamsburg that Colonial patriots launched some of the first strong protests against Parliament.

UNREST GROWS

The French and Indian War in the 1750s proved to be a training ground for America's Revolutionary forces, including Col. George Washington. In the field Washington acquitted himself with honor, and after General Braddock's defeat, he was appointed commander in chief of Virginia's army on the frontier.

Expenses from the war and economic hardships led the British to increase taxes in the colonies, and protests in Virginia and Massachusetts escalated. The 1765 Stamp Act met with general resistance. Patrick Henry inspired the Virginia General Assembly to pass the Virginia Resolves, setting forth Colonial rights according to constitutional principles. The young orator exclaimed, "If this be treason, make the most of it." The Stamp Act was repealed in 1766, but the Revenue Acts of 1767, which included the hated tax on tea, exacerbated tensions.

Ties among the colonies were strengthened when Virginia's burgesses, led by Richard Henry Lee, created a committee to communicate their problems in dealing with England to similar committees in the other colonies. When the Boston Post Bill closed that harbor in punishment for the Boston Tea Party, the Virginia Assembly moved swiftly. Although Governor Dunmore had dissolved the legislature, they met at Raleigh Tavern and recommended that a general congress be held annually. Virginia sent seven representatives to the First Continental Congress in 1774, among them Lee, Patrick Henry, and George Washington.

The following year, Patrick Henry made a plea in Richmond for arming Virginia's militia. He concluded his argument with these immortal words, "Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but, as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

Later in 1775, upon hearing news of the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia voted to make the conflict near Boston a colonywide confrontation and chose Washington as commander of the Continental Army. War had begun.

BIRTH OF THE NATION

Meeting in Williamsburg on June 12, 1776, the Virginia Convention adopted George Mason's Bill of Rights and instructed Virginia's delegates to the Continental Congress to propose independence for the colonies. Mason's document stated that "all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people," and that "all men are created free and independent, and have certain inherent rights . . . among which are the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property . . ." He also firmly upheld the right of trial by jury, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

Fun Facts **The Brothers Lee**

The only brothers to sign the Declaration of Independence were Virginians Richard Henry and Francis Lightfoot Lee.

The Congress meeting in Philadelphia adopted Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, based on Mason's bill, on July 4, 1776. The United States of America was born.

The Revolution was a bloody 7-year conflict marked by many staggering defeats for the patriots. Historians believe it was only the superb leadership and pertinacity of Gen. George Washington that inspired the Continental Army to continue so long in the face of overwhelming odds.

VICTORY AT YORKTOWN

Virginia saw little military action until March 1781, when British Gen. Lord Cornwallis arrived with his army at Yorktown. At the end of a long and rather fruitless march through the Carolinas, Cornwallis waited for the British navy to evacuate him and his men to New York.

While Cornwallis waited, Washington received word from the Comte de Rochambeau, commander of the French troops in America, that a French fleet was heading to the Chesapeake and would be at Washington's disposal through October 15. Washington and Rochambeau marched their 17,000-man allied army 450 miles to Virginia in hopes of trapping Cornwallis.

On September 5, 1781, a fleet of 19 British ships under Adm. Thomas Graves appeared at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay to evacuate Cornwallis. By coincidence, the Adm. Comte de Grasse's 24 French ships arrived at the same time. The naval battle ended in a stalemate, but Graves was forced to return to New York without Cornwallis. The French remained to block further British reinforcements or their escape by water, while Washington and Rochambeau arrived at Yorktown. The trap had worked.

After 2 weeks of bombardment, Cornwallis waved the white flag. Although the war didn't officially end until the Treaty of Paris 2 years later, the colonists and their French allies had won.

Framing the Constitution

At first the new country adopted the Articles of Confederation, which created a weak and ineffectual national government. To remedy the situation, a Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in 1781. Washington was elected the convention's president. He and fellow Virginian James Madison fought to have the new Constitution include a Bill of Rights and gradual abolition of the slave trade. Although both measures were defeated, the two Virginians voted to adopt the Constitution.

In 1788, Virginia became the 10th state to ratify the Constitution, and by 1791 the first 10 amendments—the Bill of Rights—had been added. Madison was author of the first nine amendments, Richard Henry Lee the tenth.

The Country's Early Virginian Presidents

George Washington was elected the first president under the new Constitution and took office on April 30, 1789. Although he could have stayed in office, he stepped down after two terms, thus setting a precedent that ruled until Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to a third term in 1940.

As third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson nearly doubled the size of the country by purchasing the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon.

James Madison took office as president in 1809. Unable to maintain Jefferson's peacekeeping efforts in the face of continued provocations by England, Madison was swayed by popular demand for armed response, and in 1812, Congress declared war. Although British warships attacked some coastal plantations, the only suffering Virginia witnessed was the burning of nearby Washington, D.C.

James Monroe followed, and during his two terms, the nation pushed westward, and he faced the first struggle over slavery (which resulted in the Missouri Compromise), established the Monroe Doctrine, and settled the nation's boundary with Canada.

THE CIVIL WAR

It was not long before the United States became a nation divided. The issues were states' rights and the conflicting economic goals between an industrial North and an agricultural South that relied on slavery. In the election of 1860, the Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln, whom the South vowed it would not accept; but the Democrats split and Lincoln was elected. On April 12, 1861, guns sounded at Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. Secession had become war.

First Manassas

In May 1861, the Confederate capital was transferred to Richmond, only 100 miles from Washington, dooming Virginia to be the major battleground of the Civil War. The Union strategy was to advance south and capture Richmond while at the same time taking the Shenandoah Valley to cut off the "breadbasket" of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. The first of six attempts was decisively repulsed on July 21, 1861, at the battle of First Manassas (Bull Run), where a stonewall-like stand by the Virginia Brigade of Gen. Thomas J. Jackson swept Union forces back to Washington. In addition to the victory, the South had found a new hero: "Stonewall" Jackson. Total casualties in this first major engagement of the war—4,828 men—made it apparent that this would be a long and bloody conflict.

The Peninsula Campaign

The second major offensive against Richmond, the Peninsula Campaign, devised by Union Gen. George B. McClellan, was the setting for a famous naval engagement. On March 9, 1862, two ironclad vessels, the USS *Monitor* and the CSS *Virginia* (formerly the *Merrimac*) pounded each other with cannon. Although the battle was a draw, the advent of ironclad warships heralded a new era in naval history.

Yorktown was reduced to rubble 2 months later, and the Union army advanced up the Peninsula. The Confederates retreated until taking a stand only 9 miles from Richmond. The Confederate leader, Gen. Joseph Johnson, was badly wounded during the battle. Robert E. Lee, son of Revolutionary War hero Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, was appointed head of the Army of Northern Virginia. Personally opposed to secession, Lee had sadly resigned his commission in the U.S. Army when Virginia joined the Confederacy, saying,

Mother of Presidents

Virginia is known as the "Mother of Presidents" because eight U.S. presidents were born here: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zackary Taylor, and Woodrow Wilson. Elected in 1912, Wilson was the first southern-born president since the Civil War.

Fun Facts **Like a Stonewall**

Confederate General Stonewall Jackson acquired his nickname during the First Battle of Manassas, when General Lee, marveling at his persistence in standing his ground, exclaimed, "There stands Jackson, like a stone wall!"

"My heart is broken, but I cannot raise my sword against Virginia." In a series of victories beginning on June 26, 1862, Lee defeated McClellan and Richmond was saved.

Second Manassas, Fredericksburg & Chancellorsville

The third Union drive against Richmond was repulsed at the Second Battle of Manassas, where Lee's 55,000 men soundly defeated 70,000 Union troops under Gen. John Pope. On December 13, 1862, Gen. Ambrose Burnside, newly chosen head of the Army of the Potomac, crossed the Rappahannock and struck Fredericksburg while Lee's army was in northern Virginia. The Federal advance was so slow that by the time the Union armies moved, Lee's forces were entrenched on a hill. The result was a Union massacre, and the fourth Union drive against Richmond was turned back.

Gen. Joseph Hooker took command of the Union army early in 1863, and, once again, Federal forces crossed the Rappahannock. Fighting raged for 4 days at Chancellorsville. The Union army retreated, and the fifth drive on Richmond failed. Among the heavy casualties, Stonewall Jackson was wounded by his own troops and died of complications resulting from the amputation of his arm. Jackson's loss was costly, as Lee learned in July 1863 at the small Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg.

A War of Attrition

In March 1864, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant was put in command of all Federal armies. His plan for victory called for total unrelenting warfare that would put constant pressure on all points of the Confederacy. The first great confrontation between Lee and Grant, the Battle of the Wilderness, resulted in a Confederate victory, but instead of retreating back to Maryland, Grant pushed on toward Richmond. The campaign was the heaviest fighting of the Civil War. Three times Grant tried and failed to interpose his forces between Lee and Richmond. More than 80,000 men were killed and wounded.

Laying Siege to Petersburg

Lee's resistance strengthened at Richmond, and unable to capture the capital, Grant secretly moved his army across the James River toward Petersburg, an important rail junction south of Richmond and the city's main supply line. Improvised Southern forces managed to hold Petersburg until Lee arrived. Grant then resorted to ever-tightening siege operations. If he left his trenches, Lee would be abandoning Petersburg and Richmond. Subjected to hunger and exposure, the Confederate will began to wane and periodic skirmishes weakened Confederate morale.

Lee, hoping to divert Grant, dispatched a small army under Jubal Early to the menaced Shenandoah Valley. Grant instructed Union Gen. Philip Sheridan: "The Shenandoah is to be so devastated that crows flying across it for the balance of the season will have to bring their own provender." This second major valley campaign resulted in the destruction of Early's army and Lee's main source of food.

Lee's Retreat

Back in Petersburg, Grant launched his inevitable onslaught on April 1, 1865, when Federal forces smashed through Confederate lines at Five Forks. Petersburg fell, and Richmond was soon occupied by Federal forces and visited by Lincoln and his young son, Todd. Lee's last hope was to rendezvous with Joe Johnson's army, which was retreating northward through North Carolina before Sherman's advance. However, on April 8, the vanguard of Grant's army succeeded in reaching Appomattox Court House ahead of Lee, thus blocking the Confederates' last escape route.

On April 9, 1865, the Civil War ended in Virginia at Appomattox in Wilbur McLean's farmhouse. Grant, uncompromising in war, proved compassionate in peace. Confederate soldiers were permitted to return home on parole, cavalrymen could keep their horses, and officers could retain their side arms. Rations were provided for the destitute Southerners. Speaking to his 28,000 soldiers, the remnants of the once-mighty Army of Northern Virginia, Lee said, "I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you his blessing and protection. With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration for myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell."

RECOVERY, RENEWAL & MASSIVE RESISTANCE

To a state devastated by a conflict that pitted brother against brother, recovery was slow. Besides the physical and psychological damages of the conflict, the Reconstruction era brought Virginia under federal military control until 1870.

However, by the turn of the 20th century, new railroad lines connecting remote country areas in the west with urban centers characterized Virginia's economic growth. Factories were bringing more people to the cities, and the economy, once based entirely on agriculture, now had a growing industrial base. The Hampton Roads ports enjoyed growing importance as steamship traffic carried an increasing volume of commercial freight. (Today, it's the world's largest coal port.) During this period, the great scholar, author, and educator Booker T. Washington, who had been born in slavery, studied at Virginia's Hampton Institute and achieved fame as an advisor to presidents.

World War I brought prosperity to Virginia with new factories and munitions plants and the expansion of military-training camps throughout the state.

World War II saw a population explosion, with men and women of the armed forces flocking to northern Virginia suburbs near Washington, D.C., and the port area of Hampton Roads. Many of these people stayed after the war, and by 1955, the majority of Virginians were urban-dwelling. Today, the state's population is about seven million.

Prominent in Virginia Tidewater plantation society since the 1600s, the Byrd family dominated the state's politics from World War I until the 1980s. Under their conservative control, the "Mother of Presidents" virtually withdrew from national leadership.

Under a policy of "massive resistance" to federally mandated public school integration in the 1950s, the state closed the schoolhouse doors rather than admit African Americans to previously all-white institutions.

Although the old animosities still raise their ugly heads from time to time, in 1989 Virginians chose Democrat L. Douglas Wilder as the nation's first elected African-American governor (he is now serving as mayor of Richmond), and in 2008 we cast a majority of our votes for President Barack Obama.

3 THE LAY OF THE LAND

Thanks to its topography, Virginia is both lovely and varied. Here in one place we have sandy beaches, one of the world's largest estuaries, mighty rivers cutting through rolling hills, and mountain ranges bordering one of America's most famous valleys.

TIDEWATER

The first English settlers established their beachhead on the coastal plain we call **Tidewater,** because its inland rivers and creeks rise and fall with the ocean tides. This flat land is dominated by the broad Potomac, Rappahannock, York, and James rivers, all emptying into the immense estuary known as the Chesapeake Bay.

The bay cuts the rest of us off from Virginia's Eastern Shore, which is actually the southern end of the Delmarva Peninsula—so named because it is shared by the states of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. At the southern end of the peninsula, where the Chesapeake meets the Atlantic Ocean, sits Hampton Roads, a huge natural harbor and our country's largest naval base.

The rivers divide the Tidewater into three peninsulas, or *necks,* as we call them: The Peninsula between the James and the York; the Middle Peninsula between the York and the Rappahannock; and the Northern Neck between the Rappahannock and the Potomac.

THE PIEDMONT

In Colonial times, the rivers were the main avenues of exploration, and later of commerce. Ships and large boats could navigate up to the "fall line," where the coastal plain gives way to the rolling hills of the **Piedmont** in central Virginia, from the North Carolina line north to the Hunt Country and suburban sprawl of northern Virginia.

The fall line saw the development of towns such as Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Alexandria, where ship-borne cargos would be transferred to small river boats (we still call them by their French name, *bateaux*) or to horse-drawn wagons to be hauled west into the hill country.

The unofficial capital of the Piedmont today is Charlottesville. Presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and James Madison all lived near Charlottesville. Theirs and other large holdings have given way to horse farms and vineyards nestled among the gorgeous hills.

THE MOUNTAINS & VALLEYS

This Piedmont rises to meet the **Blue Ridge,** a skinny mountain chain running the entire length of Virginia.

The crest of the central Blue Ridge is preserved in its natural state by the Shenandoah National Park, whose famous Skyland Drive connects to the Blue Ridge Parkway to form one of Virginia's scenic wonders.

Those mountaintop drives look west over a series of gorgeous valleys—together known as the Great Valley of Virginia—extending from the Potomac in the north all the way to the bordering states of Tennessee and Kentucky.

The most famous is the storied Shenandoah Valley, carved by the Shenandoah River from Winchester in the north to Lexington in the south.

The Roanoke River, another mighty waterway which eventually empties into North Carolina's Albemarle Sound, has cut its own valley, today home to Roanoke, the only large Virginia city completely surrounded by mountains.

Other rivers such as the New (misnamed since geologically it's the oldest river in North America) have carved

smaller valleys in Virginia's southwestern "tail." Mount Rogers is the state's highest point, but with the valley floors at 2,000 feet or more in altitude, there is little mystery in why this region is called the Southwest Highlands.

4 VIRGINIA IN POPULAR CULTURE

With so much history and so many monumental historical figures calling it home, Virginia and its citizens have been written about and filmed countless times. This is especially true of the Civil War.

The Commonwealth also has made its mark on the music scene—and not just because The Dave Mathews Band calls Charlottesville home. Country music as we know it today was born in hollows and valleys of the Southwest Highlands.

NON-FICTION

- *Mary Chestnut's Civil War* edited by C. Van Woodward (Yale University Press). Pulitzer Prize–winning autobiography of a Richmond housewife who kept a diary during the Civil War.
- *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate Portrait* by Fawn M. Brodie (Norton). Readable account of the third president.
- *Jefferson and His Times* by Dumas Malone (Little, Brown). Exhaustive study of Mr. Jefferson.
- *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* by Annette Gordon-Reed (The University of Virginia Press). Explores the affair between Jefferson and his slave.
- *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* by Annette Gordon-Reed (Norton). Traces descendants of Jefferson and Sally Hemings.
- *Lee* by Douglas Southall Freeman (Macmillan). Life of Gen. Robert E. Lee.
- *Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington (Doubleday). The Virginia-born African American tells how he went from slavery to agricultural scientist.
- *George Washington* by Douglas Southall Freeman (Macmillan). Father of his country explained.
- *Notes on the State of Virginia* by Thomas Jefferson (Norton). Eighteenth-century Virginia through the eyes of its famous son.
- *Virginia, The New Dominion* by Virginius Dabney (University Press of Virginia). Definitive history of the Old Dominion up to 1971.
- *The Civil War* by Shelby Foote (Vintage). Slow-talking Foote became famous appearing in Ken Burns' monumental video series (see below).
- *The Civil War* by Geoffrey C. Ward, with Ric Burns and Ken Burns (Knopf). Don't have time for the series? Read this off-shoot book.
- *Witness to Appomattox* by Richard Wheeler (HarperCollins). Recaptures Lee's surrender in 1865.

FICTION

- *Traveller* by Richard Adams (Dell). About General Lee's horse.
- *Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane (Bantam). A must-read for Civil War buffs.
- *The Confessions of Nat Turner* by William Styron (Bantam). Based on Nat Turner's slave rebellion in 1831.

FILMS & VIDEOS

- *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1937), with Fred MacMurray, Henry Fonda, and Sylvia Sidney, is based on John Fox's romantic tale set in an Appalachian mining village.
- *Brother Rat* (1938), with Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan, depicts cadet life at the Virginia Military Institute.

- *Dirty Dancing* (1987), with Jennifer Grey and Patrick Swayze; filmed at Mountain Lake Resort.
- *Sommersby* (1993), with Jodie Foster and Richard Gere; filmed in Lexington, Warm Springs, and Bath County.
- *The Civil War,* PBS series, Time-Life. Ken Burns' epic telling of the great tragedy.

MUSIC

Nashville may be the modern capital of country music, but its purest forms—Blue Grass, Old Time, and Traditional—trace their roots to the mountains of Virginia.

Indeed, southwestern Virginia has been central to the evolution of country music since the first European settlers arrived in these hills and valleys with few possessions other than their mandolins and fiddles. Some of the great country artists hail from here—the Carter Family, Ralph Stanley, and the Stonemans, to name a few—and numerous music festivals such as the famous Old Time Fiddlers Convention in Galax take place in this area.

The area's music heritage is formally recognized by **The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail,** P.O. Box 268, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219 (✆ **866/676-6847;** www.thecrookedroad.org).

This official route follows U.S. 23, U.S. 421, U.S. 58, U.S. 221, Va. 8, and Va. 40 for more than 200 miles from Breaks in the west to Rocky Mount in the east. Along the way it passes such country music shrines as the **Ralph Stanley Museum & Traditional Music Center** in Clintwood; the **Carter Family Fold** in Hiltons (p. 214); the **Birthplace of Country Music Museum** in Bristol; the **Blue Ridge Music Center** on the Blue Ridge Parkway; the **Rex Theater** in Galax; the **Floyd Country Store** in Floyd; and the **Blue Ridge Music Institute** in Ferrum.

5 EATING & DRINKING IN VIRGINIA

William Styron, a native of Newport News and author of *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* a novel based on Nat Turner's 1831 slave rebellion, once said that the French consider strong, smoke-cured Virginia hams to be America's only gourmet contribution to the world's cuisine. We Virginians love our ham baked by itself, boiled with fresh vegetables, or stuffed into piping hot biscuits.

We are not as famous as Texas for our barbecue, but we know how to slow-cook the shoulders of those pigs whose rumps end up as hams. While most of our barbecue joints soak the results in tomato-tinged sauce, the best are smart enough to put the red stuff on the side, thus leaving the pork to be enjoyed in all its smoky glory.

We are also crazy about rockfish (which you know as sea bass) and blue crabs, especially in their soft-shell stage, from the Chesapeake Bay. Our rivers give us bone-filled shad and rainbow trout. Our farms produce a plethora of vegetables during the summer (I've never tasted sweeter Silver Queen corn), and our Shenandoah orchards are famous for autumn apples.

And let's not forget the peanut, one of Virginia's major crops. Where else will you partake of peanut soup?

Chefs all over Virginia turn our fresh produce into exciting variations of traditional southern fare, but when we talk of down-home-style Virginia cooking, we mean what you Yankees call "comfort food." Every small town and most big cities have at least one inexpensive, family-style restaurant serving simple fare such as southern fried chicken, grilled pork chops, and ham accompanied by fresh vegetables, often boiled with smoky seasoning meat.

Tips The Best Virginia-style Chow

You can dine on all types of cuisine in Virginia, but we still use recipes handed down since Colonial times—ancient dishes such as peanut soup and Sally Lunn bread—or ham biscuits and other such present-day Ole Virginny goodies. The best places to sample Virginia's own cuisine are:

- **Gadsby's Tavern,** 138 N. Royal St., Alexandria (✆ **703/548-1288;** p. 72).
- **The Beverly Restaurant,** 12 E. Beverly St., Staunton (✆ **540/886-4317;** p. 172).
- **Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant and Bakery,** 74 Rowe Rd., Staunton (✆ **540/886-1833;** p. 172).
- **Roanoker Restaurant,** 2522 Colonial Ave., Roanoke (✆ **540/344-7746;** p. 202).
- **Eley's Barbecue,** 3221 N. Washington St., Petersburg (✆ **804/732-5861;** p. 244).
- **Colonial Williamsburg Taverns,** Williamsburg (✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-2141; see chapter 11).
- **Old Chickahominy House,** 1211 Jamestown Rd., Williamsburg (✆ **757/229-4689;** p. 270).

In other words, dining at a local restaurant in Virginia can be a real challenge for those on low-fat diets!

VIRGINIA'S VINOS

When Thomas Jefferson returned home to Charlottesville in 1789 after 5 years in Paris as minister to France, he brought with him a keen appreciation for fine wine. Virginians had been growing indigenous grapes and making lousy local wine since 1607, when the Jamestown colony ordered each household to cultivate 10 grapevines. Mr. Jefferson believed that European grapes could be grown here, and he tried seven times without success to establish a vineyard winery near his home in Charlottesville.

Too bad he can't come back to life today, for Jefferson would find his beloved Virginia dotted with more than 140 vineyards. Indeed, official state policy is to encourage the growing of grapes and the production of wine. (It strikes me as ironic that the home state of tee-totaling Baptist preachers Pat Robertson and the late Jerry Falwell is switching from tobacco to alcohol!)

Wineries have sprouted up like weeds all over Virginia, with the oldest and still best in the rolling hills of the Hunt Country in Northern Virginia (see chapter 5) and near Charlottesville (see chapter 7).

Many of them are small mom-and-pop operations (if this were beer, we would call them microbreweries), but together they rank Virginia with California, Washington, Oregon, and New York as the nation's top wine-producing states.

The climate here is too varied to produce consistently good grapes. One summer may be hot and dry, the next warm and damp. That's not to say you won't run across a good local vintage from an exceptional year, but the state usually doesn't grow the quality of grapes found in sunnier France, Italy, and California. Moderately good wines at moderate prices best describes Virginia's vinos.

Chardonnay is the most widely grown grape here, but many experts say viognier is perhaps the best suited white grape for Virginia. You'll also find Riesling in good quantity. Among the reds, cabernet sauvignon is the most widely planted grape.

Many gourmet groceries and wine and cheese shops sell Virginia wines, and occasionally you'll find them in supermarket beer-and-wine sections. Because the small vineyards don't produce enough quantity to satisfy wine distributors, from whom licensed grocers and restaurateurs are required by state law to purchase wine (that's correct: They cannot buy directly from the wineries), local vintages appear on surprisingly few restaurant lists.

Accordingly, the best places to sample them are by visiting the wineries which have tasting rooms. I mention some of the better ones in the destination chapters in this book.

The **Virginia Wine Marketing Office,** 1001 E. Broad St., Ste. 140, Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **804/344-8200;** www.virginiawine.org), posts "Wine Trails" (marked by wine-logo road signs) for each region in the state and publishes an annual, roadmap-size "Virginia Winery Guide," which describes each winery and plots its location. (Copies also are available from the Virginia Tourism Corporation; see "Visitor Information" in chapter 3.) You can download winery guides by regions and get a schedule of wine festivals on the Wine Marketing Office's website.

Walker Elliott Rowe's *Wandering through Virginia's Vineyards* (Apprentice House, 2005) is a very good review of who's growing what and why. To buy a copy, contact Apprentice House in Baltimore, Maryland, at ✆ **410/617-5265** or www.apprenticehouse.com.

Virginia Wine Lover magazine (www.virginiawinelover.com) is a good source of news.

3

Planning Your Trip to Virginia

Whether you plan to spend a day, a week, 2 weeks, or longer in Virginia, you will need to make many "where," "when," and "how" choices before you leave home. In this chapter, I provide basic trip-planning information as well as advice based on my own years of traveling the Old Dominion. For additional help and for more on-the-ground resources in Virginia, please turn to chapter 13, "Fast Facts."

The travel industry in Virginia is highly developed and modern, and overall the state is adept at welcoming visitors. As we say, there are no "snakes in the bushes" waiting to bite you, meaning you should encounter few unforeseen difficulties or other surprises if you have carefully planned your trip.

Although our weather can be a tad unpredictable, Virginia is blessed with a mild year-round climate. It's easy to get to and easy to get around, especially if you are driving your own vehicle. Prices are moderate and crime is not a problem in most areas of the state.

We have a wide variety of things to see and do. We are a history-loving people, and many of us also revere our open spaces and natural forests. In addition to old homes and buildings, we also offer many adventures in the great outdoors, from hiking mountain trails to canoeing and kayaking on lazy rivers. And our state government is taking an active role in lessening the impact of tourism on our environment.

A fine old time awaits you here in Ole Virginny, so let's get going!

1 WHEN TO GO

Virginia is a gorgeous place in late September and early October, during Indian summer when our most settled period of weather gives us warm days and cool nights. It gets even more beautiful later in October, when the turning leaves blaze orange, red, and yellow across the state. The "leaf season" also is the most crowded time in the western part of the state, when throngs of visitors mob the mountains. (You can find out the approximate dates for peak color in the Shenandoah Valley by calling ✆ **800/434-5323.**)

Otherwise, Virginia is busiest during summer, when the historic sites, theme parks, and beaches draw millions of visitors—and hotel rates are at their highest. The least crowded—and least expensive—time to visit is in spring. That's when the dogwoods, azaleas, and wildflowers are in a riot of bloom from one end of Virginia to the other.

THE CLIMATE

Virginia enjoys four distinct seasons, with some variations from the warmer, more humid coastal areas to the cooler climate in the mountains. Wintertime snows are usually confined to northern Virginia and the mountains. In summer, extremely hot and humid spells can last several weeks but are normally short-lived. Spring and autumn are long seasons, and in terms of natural beauty and heavenly climate, they're optimum times to visit. Annual rainfall averages 46 inches; annual snowfall, 18 inches.

Virginia's Average Temperatures

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
High (°F)	44	46	56	68	75	84	90	88	81	69	57	47
High (°C)	7	8	13	20	24	29	32	31	27	21	14	8
Low (°F)	26	27	38	45	54	62	66	65	59	48	39	28
Low (°C)	–3	–3	3	7	12	17	19	18	15	9	4	–2

VIRGINIA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check http://events.frommers.com, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

JANUARY

Whale-Watching Boat Trips, Virginia Beach. The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center sends cruise boats out looking for whales. Sightings are not guaranteed. Call ✆ **757/437-2628,** or go to www.vmsm.com. January 2 to mid-March.

Open House at Stratford Hall, on the Northern Neck, Lee's birthplace. Call ✆ **804/493-8038,** or go to www.stratfordhall.org. January 15.

Lee Birthday Celebrations, Alexandria. Period music, plus house tours at Lee-Fendall House. Call ✆ **703/548-1789,** or go to www.leefendallhouse.org. Fourth Sunday in January.

FEBRUARY

George Washington Birthday Events, Alexandria, Mount Vernon, Fredericksburg. Old Town Alexandria puts on the dog to celebrate GW's birthday: walking tours; symposia; black tie or Colonial costume Saturday-evening dinner, followed by a birthnight ball at Gadsby's Tavern; a parade on Monday (✆ **800/388-9119** or 703/838-4200; www.visitalexandria.com). George's home at Mount Vernon also gets in on the act. Call ✆ **703/780-2000,** or go to www.mountvernon.org. Down in Fredericksburg, special activities are held at Mary Washington House and George Washington's Ferry Farm. Call ✆ **800/678-4748** or 540/373-1776 (www.visitfred.com). Presidents' Day weekend.

Maymont Flower and Garden Show, Richmond. A breath of spring, with landscape exhibits, vendors, and speakers at the Greater Richmond Coliseum. Call ✆ **804/358-7166,** or go to www.maymont.org. Late February.

MARCH

James Madison's Birthday, Montpelier. Ceremony at cemetery and reception at house. Call ✆ **540/672-2728,** or go to www.montpelier.org. March 16.

Highland Maple Festival, Monterey. See maple syrup produced, pour it over pancakes, and visit one of the state's largest crafts shows. Call ✆ **540/468-2550,** or go to www.highlandcounty.org. Second and third weekends in March.

Patrick Henry Speech Reenactment, St. John's Episcopal Church, Richmond. "Give me liberty or give me death" resounds once again. Call ✆ **804/648-5015,** or go to www.historicstjohnschurch.org. Closest Sunday to March 23.

APRIL

Thomas Jefferson's Birthday Commemoration, Monticello, Charlottesville. Wreath-laying ceremony at

gravesite, fife-and-drum corps, and a speaker. Call ✆ **434/984-9822,** or go to www.monticello.org. April 13.

Virginia Arts Festival, Williamsburg, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Virginia Beach. Famous performers appear at venues from Williamsburg to Virginia Beach during this month-long festival. Call ✆ **757/282-2800,** or go to www.virginiaartsfest.com. Mid-April to mid-May.

Virginia Fly-Fishing Festival, Waynesboro. Anglers gather beside the South River for demonstrations, lectures, casting instruction, live music, and wine tasting. Call ✆ **703/403-8338,** or go to www.vaflyfishingfestival.org. Third weekend in April.

Norfolk's International Azalea Festival, Norfolk. The brilliant beauty of azaleas in bloom is the backdrop for ceremonies in the Norfolk Botanical Garden saluting NATO countries, including the crowning of a queen who reigns at a parade and other festivities. Also features a military display that includes an air show, visiting of ships, and aircraft ground exhibits. Call ✆ **757/441-1852,** or go to www.azaleafestival.org. Last week in April.

Historic Garden Week in Virginia, statewide. The event of the year for garden lovers—a celebration with tours of the grounds and gardens at more than 250 Virginia landmarks, including plantations and other sites open only during this week. For information, contact the **Garden Club of Virginia,** 12 E. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **804/644-7776** or 804/643-7141; www.vagardenweek.org). Last full week in April.

May

Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival, Winchester. Acres of orchards in blossom throughout the valley, plus 5 days of music, band competitions, parades, the coronation of the queen, footraces, arts and crafts sales, midway amusements, and a carnival, with a celebrity grand marshal. Call ✆ **540/662-3863,** or go to www.thebloom.com. Usually first weekend in May.

Virginia Gold Cup Race Meet, Great Meadow Course, The Plains. Everyone dresses to the nines for the state's premier steeplechase event. Call ✆ **800/697-2237** or 540/347-1215 (www.vagoldcup.com). First Saturday in May.

Seafood Festival, Chincoteague. All you can eat—a seafood lover's dream. Get tickets in advance from **Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce,** P.O. Box 460, Melfa, VA 23410 (✆ **757/787-2460;** www.chincoteaguechamber.com). First weekend in May.

Jamestown Landing Day, Jamestown. Militia presentations and sailing demonstrations celebrate arrival of the first English settlers in 1607. Call ✆ **888/593-4682** or 757/253-4838 (www.historyisfun.org). Early May.

Reenactment of Battle of New Market, New Market Battlefield State Historical Park, New Market. Call ✆ **866/515-1864** or 540/740-3101 (www.vmi.edu/newmarket). Weekend closest to May 15.

New Market Day, Virginia Military Institute Campus, Lexington. Annual roll call for cadets who died in the Battle of New Market. Call ✆ **540/464-7000,** or go to www.vmi.edu. May 15.

Virginia Hunt Country Stable Tour, Loudon County. A unique opportunity to view prestigious Leesburg, Middleburg, and Upperville horse farms and private estates. Sponsored by Trinity Episcopal Church, Upperville. Call ✆ **540/592-3711,** or go to www.middleburgonline.com/stabletour. Memorial Day weekend.

Shenandoah Valley Music Festival, Orkney Springs. Music from classical to country fills the mountain air. Call **Orkney Springs Hotel** at ✆ **800/459-3396** (tickets only) or 540/459-3396 (www.musicfest.org). Concerts start Memorial Day weekend and run on weekends through August.

Vintage Virginia Wine Festival, Great Meadows Steeplechase Course, The Plains. Taste the premium vintages from 35 wineries at this Hunt Country festival. Arts and crafts displays; food; and jazz, reggae, and pop music. Call ✆ **800/277-2675,** or go to www.vintagevirginia.com (for information about this and many other wine festivals statewide). Last weekend in May.

June

Harborfest, Norfolk. Tall ships, sailboat races, air shows, military demonstrations, and fireworks. Call ✆ **757/441-1852,** or go to www.festeventsva.org. Mid-June.

Alexandria Red Cross Waterfront Festival, Oronoco Bay Park, Old Town Alexandria. Fundraiser carnival features bands, fireworks, and views from atop a Ferris wheel to Washington, D.C. Call ✆ **703/549-8300,** or go to www.waterfrontfestival.org. Third weekend in June.

Boardwalk Art Show, Virginia Beach. Works in all mediums, between 14th and 28th streets on the Boardwalk. Call ✆ **800/822-3224,** or go to www.vbfun.com. Mid-June.

Ash Lawn Opera Festival, Charlottesville. James Monroe's home is one of several Charlottesville settings for opera, musicals, and concerts. Call ✆ **434/293-4500,** or go to www.ashlawnopera.org. End of June to August.

July

Independence Day Celebrations, statewide. Every town parties and shoots fireworks in honor of the nation's birthday. Contact local tourist information offices. July 4th.

Pony Swim and Auction, Chincoteague. Famous wild horses swim the Assateague Channel and are later herded to carnival grounds and auctioned off. Return swim to Assateague on Friday. Call ✆ **757/336-6161** (fax 757/336-1241; www.chincoteaguechamber.com). The carnival-like festival is last 2 weeks in July; swim on last Wednesday in July.

August

Virginia Highlands Festival, Abingdon. Appalachian Mountain culture showcase for musicians, artists, artisans, and writers. Area's largest crafts show has an antiques market and hot-air balloons. Call ✆ **800/435-3440** or 276/676-2282 (www.vahighlandsfestival.org). First 2 weeks in August.

Old Time Fiddlers' Convention, Galax. Dating to 1935, one of the largest and oldest such conventions in the world. It also coincides with the Fiddlefest street festival. Call ✆ **276/236-8541,** or go to www.oldfiddlersconvention.com. Early August.

September

American Music Festival, Virginia Beach. Top entertainers perform on the sand. Tickets are first-come, first-served. Call ✆ **800/822-3224,** or go to www.vbfun.com. Labor Day weekend.

The Irvington Stomp, Irvington. Guests actually stomp grapes in the European fashion during this fun-filled event at White Fences Vineyard & Winery. Call ✆ **804/438-5559,** or go to www.irvingtonstomp.com. Saturday of Labor Day weekend.

State Fair of Virginia, Richmond Raceway Complex, Richmond. Rides, entertainment, agricultural exhibits, pioneer farmstead, and flower shows. Call ✆ **800/588-3247** or 804/228-3200 (www.statefairva.org). Ten days in late September.

October

Chincoteague Oyster Festival, Chincoteague. A feast of oysters—but for advance ticket holders only. Call ✆ **804/336-6161,** or go to www.chincoteaguechamber.com. Early October.

Waterford Homes Tour and Crafts Exhibit, Waterford Village. This tiny Quaker town grows to some 40,000 on this one weekend. Call ✆ **540/882-3018,** or go to www.waterfordva.org. First weekend in October.

Virginia Film Festival, Charlottesville. University of Virginia pays tribute to all things celluloid. Call ✆ **800/882-3378,** or go to www.vafilm.com. Mid-October.

Yorktown Day, Colonial National Historic Park, Yorktown. British surrender in 1781 celebrated with a parade, historic house tours, Colonial music and dress, and military drills. Call ✆ **757/898-2410** or 898-3400 (www.nps.gov/colo). October 19.

International Gold Cup, Great Meadows Course, The Plains. Fall colors provide a backdrop to one of the most prestigious steeplechase races. Call ✆ **800/697-2237** or 540/347-1215 (www.vagoldcup.com). Third Saturday in October.

Marine Corps Marathon, Arlington. More than 18,000 men and women run a 26.2-mile course from Arlington through Washington, D.C., and back. The U.S. Marine Corps' "People's Marathon" is open to all (there's even a wheelchair division). Call ✆ **800/786-8762** or 703/784-2265 (www.marinemarathon.com). Third or fourth Sunday in October.

November

The First Thanksgiving, Charles City. Reenactment at Berkeley Plantation. Call ✆ **888/466-6018** or 804/829-6018 (www.berkeleyplantation.com). Early November.

Assateague Island Waterfowl Week, Chincoteague. The only time of the year when visitors can drive to the northern end of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague Island. Guided walks for pedestrians. Call ✆ **757/336-6122,** or go to http://chinco.fws.gov. Thanksgiving weekend.

December

Mount Vernon by Candlelight, Mount Vernon. See Washington's mansion as he would have, by the light of candles. Tickets required. Call ✆ **703/780-2000,** or go to www.mountvernon.org. First week in December.

Grand Illumination, Williamsburg. Gala opening of holiday season with fife-and-drum corps, illumination of buildings, caroling, dancing, and fireworks. Call ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/220-7645 (www.colonialwilliamsburg.com). First Saturday in December.

Christmas Candlelight Tour, Fredericksburg. Historic homes welcome visitors. Call ✆ **800/678-4748** or 540/373-1776 (www.visitfred.com). First weekend in December.

Monticello Candlelight Tour, Charlottesville. Experience authentic Colonial decorations. Call ✆ **804/984-9822,** or go to www.monticello.org. Early December.

Historic Michie Tavern Feast and Open House, Charlottesville. The old tavern puts on two Christmastime feasts. Reservations required. Call ✆ **804/977-1234,** or go to www.michietavern.com. Second weekend in December.

Jamestown Christmas, Jamestown. Jamestown Settlement is all decked out 17th-century-style. Call ✆ **888/593-4682** or 757/253-4838 (www.historyisfun.org). Second to fourth week in December.

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

PASSPORTS

Virtually every traveler (including U.S. citizens) entering the U.S.—by air, land, or sea—is required to present a valid passport. For information on how to obtain a passport, see "Passports" in "Fast Facts: Virginia," in chapter 13.

VISAS

For up-to-date information about U.S. visas, go to **www.travel.state.gov/visa**.

The U.S. State Department has a **Visa Waiver Program (VWP)** allowing citizens of the following countries to enter the United States without a visa for stays of up to 90 days: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Citizens of Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Republic of Korea, and Slovakia are soon to be admitted to the VWP. (***Note:*** This list was accurate at press time; consult www.travel.state.gov/visa for the most up-to-date list of countries in the VWP.)

Even though a visa isn't necessary, in an effort to help U.S. officials check travelers against terror watch lists before they arrive at U.S. borders, visitors from VWP countries must register online through the **Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)** before boarding a plane or a boat to the U.S. Travelers will complete an electronic application providing basic personal and travel eligibility information. The Department of Homeland Security recommends filling out the form at least 3 days before traveling. Authorizations will be valid for up to 2 years or until the traveler's passport expires, whichever comes first. Currently, there is no fee for the online application.

Note: Any passport issued on or after October 26, 2006, by a VWP country must be an **e-Passport** for VWP travelers to be eligible to enter the U.S. without a visa. Citizens of these nations also need to present a round-trip air or cruise ticket upon arrival. E-Passports contain computer chips capable of storing biometric information, such as the required digital photograph of the holder. If your passport doesn't have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if it is a valid passport issued before October 26, 2005, and includes a machine-readable zone, or between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006, and includes a digital photograph.

For more information, go to **http://travel.state.gov/visa**. Canadian citizens may enter the United States without visas; they will need to show passports and proof of residence, however.

Citizens of all other countries must have (1) a valid passport that expires at least 6 months later than the scheduled end of their visit to the U.S., and (2) a tourist visa.

CUSTOMS

What You Can Bring into the U.S.

Every visitor 21 years of age or older may bring in, free of duty, the following: (1) 1 liter of wine or hard liquor; (2) 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars (but not from Cuba), or 3 pounds of smoking tobacco; and (3) $100 worth of gifts. These exemptions are offered to travelers who spend at least 72 hours in the United States and who have not claimed them within the preceding 6 months. It is forbidden to bring into the country almost any meat products (including canned, fresh, and dried meat products such as buillion, soup mixes, and so forth).

Generally, condiments, including vinegars, oils, and spices; coffee; tea; and some cheeses and baked goods are permitted. Avoid rice products, as rice can often harbor insects. Bringing fruits and vegetables is not advised, though not prohibited. Customs will allow produce depending on where you got it and where you're going after you arrive in the U.S. International visitors may carry in or out up to $10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency with no formalities; larger sums must be declared to U.S. Customs on entering or leaving, which includes filing form CM 4790. For details regarding U.S. Customs and Border Protection, consult your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, or **U.S. Customs** (www.customs.gov).

What You Can Take Home from the United States

For information on what you're allowed to bring home, contact one of the following agencies:

U.S. Citizens: U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP), 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (✆ **877/287-8667;** www.cbp.gov).

Canadian Citizens: Canada Border Services Agency (✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens: HM Customs & Excise at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at **www.hmce.gov.uk**.

Australian Citizens: Australian Customs Service at ✆ **1300/363-263,** or log on to **www.customs.gov.au**.

New Zealand Citizens: New Zealand Customs, The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; **www.customs.govt.nz**).

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (particularly cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into the United States.

3 GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

GETTING THERE

By Plane

Most major domestic and international airlines service the two airports in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area (see below).

The major international gateway to Virginia is **Washington Dulles International Airport** (IAD; ✆ **703/661-2700;** www.mwaa.com), about 25 miles west of Washington, D.C. Dulles is also a regional hub for domestic flights, and fares can be less to fly in and out of here than other airports in Virginia.

Also serving northern Virginia is **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport** (DCA; ✆ **703/685-8000;** www.mwaa.com), on the Potomac River 2 miles north of Alexandria.

See the destination chapters for details about Virginia's other gateways:

- **Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport** (CHO; ✆ 804/973-8341; www.gocho.com).
- **Newport News-Williamsburg International Airport** (PHF; ✆ 757/877-0221; www.nnwairport.com).
- **Norfolk International Airport** (ORF; ✆ 757/857-3351; www.norfolkairport.com).
- **Richmond International Airport** (RIC; ✆ 804/226-3000; www.flyrichmond.com).
- **Roanoke Regional Airport** (ROA; ✆ 540/362-1999; www.roanokeregionalairport.com).

Tips Driving the Civil War Trails

One benefit of touring by car is that you can follow the state's Civil War Trails. These sign-posted driving tours follow the Shenandoah battles, the Peninsula campaign of 1862, the battles from Manassas to Fredericksburg, Lee versus Grant as the Union drove south to Richmond in 1864, and Lee's retreat from Petersburg to Appomattox in 1865. Check out **www.civilwartrails.org**.

- **Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport** (SHD; ✆ 540/234-8304; www.flyshd.com).

Many flights to these regional airports are of the "commuter" variety, and you likely will pay higher fares to fly into them than into Washington Dulles.

By Car

Interstate highway **I-95** runs north-south through Virginia between Alexandria and Emporia. From western Maryland and eastern Tennessee, the major highway is **I-81,** which runs north-south the entire length of the state through the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Highlands.

Major western entrance points are from West Virginia via **I-77** and **I-64.** The latter runs east-west across the state between Covington and Norfolk. In northern Virginia, **I-66** traverses the state east-west between Arlington and I-81 at Strasburg. I-66 can slow to a snail's pace during rush hours in northern Virginia.

By Train

Amtrak (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) has train service to Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Richmond, Williamsburg, Newport News, Charlottesville, Staunton, and Clifton Forge. Amtrak's Thruway bus service connects Newport News to Norfolk, and Clifton Forge to Roanoke.

The high-speed Acela, Metroliner service, and other northeast corridor trains connect New York to Union Station in Washington, D.C., where riders can board the Metrorail subway to Alexandria See "Getting There," in the Alexandria section of chapter 5.

International visitors can buy a **USA Rail Pass,** good for 5, 15, or 30 days of unlimited travel on **Amtrak.** The pass is available online or through many overseas travel agents. See Amtrak's website for the cost of travel within the western, eastern, or northwestern United States. Reservations are generally required and should be made as early as possible. Regional rail passes are also available.

GETTING AROUND

By Car

Traveling in your own vehicle is by far the best way to see Virginia. Interstate highways link all the major cities and many towns (see "Getting There by Car," above), but the prime advantage of driving is that you can explore on your own and drive our scenic routes.

Maximum speed limits are 65 mph on the Interstate highways, 55 mph on state highways, and 35 mph or less in towns and cities.

Accidents are common on both I-95 and I-81, which are heavy-duty truck routes, so be especially careful while driving on them. (So many trucks slow down as they creep side-by-side uphill and then race down the other side that I seldom get to use my cruise control on I-81!)

The Virginia Tourism Corporation (see "Visitor Information" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13) distributes a detailed

state road map as well as one that highlights the scenic drives.

The **Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT),** 1401 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **804/786-5731;** www.virginiadot.org), publishes a free list of road construction projects, and it maintains a 24-hour-a-day **Highway Helpline** (✆ **800/367-7623**) for information about road conditions and to report emergencies. It has live webcams of key northern Virginia and Hampton Roads highways and posts road condition maps online.

Dial your car radio to AM 610 or call ✆ **800/792-2800** to check on conditions in Hampton Roads' often-congested tunnels.

Dial ✆ **#77** on your cellphone to report an accident or other emergency to the state highway patrol.

All major rental car companies have agencies at the state's airports. **Enterprise** (www.enterprise.com) also is present in many small towns.

Visitors from abroad who plan to rent a car in the United States should keep in mind that insurance and taxes are almost never included in quoted rental car rates in the U.S. Be sure to ask your rental agency about additional fees for these. They can add a significant cost to your car rental.

Foreign driver's licenses are usually recognized in the U.S., but you may want to consider obtaining an international driver's license, especially if your home license is not written in English.

By Plane

You can get around Virginia by flying from one of its airports to another (see "Getting There by Plane," above), but you are likely to change planes along the way. For example, you may have to fly through Washington Dulles International Airport, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, or Charlotte, North Carolina, to get from Roanoke to Richmond. As a result, flying around the state can be more time-consuming than driving, and more expensive, too. Check with the airlines or your travel agent for the most efficient, cost-effective routing.

Some large airlines offer transatlantic or transpacific passengers special discount tickets under the name **Visit USA,** which allows mostly one-way travel from one U.S. destination to another at very low prices. Unavailable in the U.S., these discount tickets must be purchased abroad in conjunction with your international fare. This system is the easiest, fastest, cheapest way to see the country.

By Train

Amtrak trains (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) are better for getting to and from Virginia than for getting around the state. All Amtrak trains between New York and Florida stop at Washington, D.C., and Richmond; some stop at Alexandria and Fredericksburg. Another train follows this route from New York to Richmond, and then heads east to Newport News via Williamsburg. From Newport News, Amtrak's Thruway bus service connects to Norfolk and Virginia Beach. Some east- and westbound trains to and from D.C. stop at Charlottesville, Staunton, and Clifton Forge. From Clifton Forge, a Thruway bus connects to Roanoke.

By Bus

Greyhound (✆ **800/231-2222;** www.greyhound.com) is the sole nationwide bus line. While you can travel from one major Virginia city to another by bus, service is not available to many small towns, and that includes all of them in the Shenandoah Valley. Taking the bus may be the least expensive way to travel around Virginia, but it also is the least convenient and the least comfortable.

Tips Get Out of Your Vehicle & Look Around

I don't have enough pages in this book to cover all of Virginia's picturesque hamlets, villages, and towns. Don't hesitate to park your vehicle and have a look around when a charmer catches your attention. My fellow Virginians will ensure that you are richly rewarded.

International visitors who insist on traveling by bus can obtain information about the **Greyhound North American Discovery Pass.** The pass, which offers unlimited travel and stopovers in the U.S. and Canada, can be obtained from foreign travel agents or through www.discoverypass.com.

4 MONEY & COSTS

Frommer's lists prices in the local currency. The currency conversions quoted below were correct at press time. However, rates fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency exchange website such as **www.oanda.com/convert/classic** or **www.xe.com** to check up-to-the-minute rates.

As you might expect, Virginia is most expensive in its larger cities and in the Washington, D.C., suburbs of northern Virginia. It's also hard to find bargains at the beach in the summer or in the Shenandoah during the October "leaf season." Even so, the state is not a particularly expensive destination, and is much less costly than London, New York, and other major metropolitan areas. While there are plenty of high-end restaurants, luxury hotels, and bed-and-breakfasts, smaller independent hotels and motels abound, as well as multitudinous representatives of all the major budget chains. It's possible to eat and stay well in Virginia without spending a fortune, and should you decide to splurge, you can find a lot of luxury for your money.

However much you plan to spend, it's always advisable to bring money in a variety of forms on a vacation: a mix of cash, credit cards, and traveler's checks. You should also exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel before you leave home, or withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM.

ATMs

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home while in Virginia is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a "cash machine" or "cashpoint." The **Cirrus** (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) networks span the country; you can find them even in remote regions. Go to your bank card's website to find ATM locations at your destination. Be sure you know your daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

The Value of the U.S. Dollar vs. Other Popular Currencies

US$	Can$	UK£	Euro (€)	Aus$	NZ$
$1	C$1.10	£0.65	€.70	A$1.15	NZ$1.40

Tips Dear Visa: I'm Off to Richmond!

Some credit card companies recommend that you notify them of an impending trip or they may become suspicious when the card is used numerous times in a destination that's not your home and block your charges. If you don't call your credit card company in advance, you should carry the card's toll-free emergency number with you, so that you can get in touch if a charge is refused. But perhaps the most important lesson here is to carry more than one card on your trip; a card might not work for any number of reasons, so having a backup is actually quite important.

If your credit or debit cards disappear and you cannot remember the number to call, **www.cancelthatcard.com** gives phone numbers to report lost or stolen cards.

Don't forget your personal identification number (PIN) since all ATMs in Virginia require them to withdraw cash. American cards use **4-digit PINs,** so check with your bank before leaving home if yours is longer.

Note: Many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee is often higher for international transactions (up to $5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they're rarely more than $2). In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. To compare banks' ATM fees within the U.S., use **www.bankrate.com**. Visitors from outside the U.S. should also find out whether their bank assesses a 1% to 3% fee on charges incurred abroad.

CREDIT CARDS & DEBIT CARDS

Credit cards are the most widely used form of payment in the United States: The most commonly accepted are **Visa** (Barclaycard in Britain), **MasterCard** (EuroCard in Europe), **American Express, Diners Club,** and **Discover.** They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and offer relatively good exchange rates. You can withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, but high fees make these advances a pricey way to get cash.

I highly recommended that you travel with at least one major credit card. You must have a credit card to rent a car, and hotels and airlines usually require a credit card imprint as a deposit against expenses.

ATM cards with major credit card backing, known as **debit cards,** are now a commonly acceptable form of payment at most businesses. Debit cards draw money directly from your checking account. Some stores and most U.S. post offices enable you to receive cash back on your debit card purchases as well.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Though credit cards and debit cards are more often used, traveler's checks are still widely accepted in the U.S. Foreign visitors should make sure that traveler's checks are in U.S. dollars; foreign-currency checks are difficult to exchange.

You can buy traveler's checks at most banks. Most are offered in denominations of $20, $50, $100, $500, and sometimes $1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler's checks are offered by **American Express** (✆ **800/807-6233** or 800/221-7282 for cardholders—this number accepts collect calls,

offers service in several foreign languages, and exempts Amex gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee) and **Visa** (✆ **800/732-1322;** AAA members can obtain Visa checks for a $9.95 fee for checks up to $1,500 at most AAA offices or by calling ✆ **866/339-3378**). Call ✆ **800/223-9920** for information on MasterCard traveler's checks.

Be sure to keep a copy of the traveler's checks serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they are stolen or lost. You'll get a refund faster if you know the numbers.

5 HEALTH

STAYING HEALTHY

Malaria may have been a curse of the colonists who settled Virginia in the 17th century, but today the state poses no unusual health threats.

Although Virginia mosquitoes don't carry malaria, they are still rampant in the Tidewater during summer, especially in the marshes around Chincoteague, Assateague, and Tangier islands, so use plenty of insect repellent on the Eastern Shore.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET SICK AWAY FROM HOME

Hospitals and emergency care facilities are widespread in Virginia, so unless you're deep in the backcountry, help will be close at hand. I list statewide **emergency numbers** under "Fast Facts" in chapter 13.

In case of illness, consider asking your hotel concierge or staff to recommend a local doctor—even his or her own. Most Virginia cities and towns have hospitals, and you can try their emergency rooms for assistance. Many have walk-in clinics for cases that are not life threatening. You may not get immediate attention, but you won't pay the high price of an emergency room visit (usually a minimum of $300 just for signing your name).

If you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Pack **prescription medications** in your carry-on luggage, and carry them in their original containers, with pharmacy labels—otherwise they won't make it through airport security. Visitors from outside the U.S. should carry generic names of prescription drugs.

For U.S. travelers, most reliable healthcare plans provide coverage if you get sick away from home. Foreign visitors may have to pay all medical costs upfront and be reimbursed later. Accordingly, you may want to buy travel insurance. See "Insurance" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13, where I also list additional **emergency numbers.**

6 SAFETY

Most areas of Virginia are relatively free of street crime, but this is not the case in some parts of Alexandria, Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke, and other cities. Ask your hotel staff or the local visitor information office whether neighborhoods you intend to visit are safe. Avoid deserted streets and alleys, and always be especially alert at night. Never leave anything of value visible in your parked car; it's an invitation to theft.

When heading outdoors, keep in mind that injuries often occur when people fail to follow instructions. Believe the experts who tell you to stay on the established trails. Hike in designated areas, follow the marine charts if piloting your own boat, carry rain gear, and wear a life jacket when

canoeing or rafting. Watch for summer thunderstorms that can leave you drenched, send bolts of lightning your way, and suddenly flood otherwise peaceful streams. Mountain weather can be fickle any season.

7 SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

In addition to the destination-specific resources listed below, please visit Frommers.com for additional specialized travel resources.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Virginia has its intolerant contingent, particularly in rural areas, and the conservative Republicans in our state legislature are not about to legalize gay marriage (fornication is still technically a crime in Virginia regardless of gender!). But by and large, the state is a safe, comfortable place for gay and lesbian travelers. There are gay and lesbian communities in most cities here.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling. There are more options and resources out there than ever before. This is especially true in Virginia, where most establishments are required to comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. That means they have ramps for wheelchairs and at least one room equipped for travelers with disabilities.

The **America the Beautiful—National Park and Federal Recreational Lands Pass—Access Pass** (formerly the **Golden Access Passport**) gives visually impaired or persons with permanent disabilities (regardless of age) free lifetime entrance to federal recreation sites administered by the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation. This includes national parks, monuments, historic sites, recreation areas, and national wildlife refuges.

The America the Beautiful Access Pass can be obtained only in person at any NPS facility that charges an entrance fee. You need to show proof of medically determined disability. Besides free entry, the pass also offers a 50% discount on some federal-use fees charged for such facilities as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching, and tours. For more information, go to www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm or call ✆ **888/467-2757.**

Organizations that offer a vast range of resources and assistance to travelers with disabilities include **MossRehab** (✆ **800/CALL-MOSS** [225-5667]; www.mossresourcenet.org); the **American Foundation for the Blind** (**AFB;** ✆ **800/232-5463;** www.afb.org); and **SATH** (Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality; ✆ **212/447-7284;** www.sath.org). **Air AmbulanceCard.com** is now partnered with SATH and allows you to preselect top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency.

Access-Able Travel Source (✆ **303/232-2979;** www.access-able.com) offers a comprehensive database on travel agents from around the world with experience in accessible travel; destination-specific access information; and links to such resources as service animals, equipment rentals, and access guides.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. Among them are **Flying Wheels Travel** (✆ **507/451-5005;** www.flyingwheelstravel.com) and **Accessible Journeys** (✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com).

Flying with Disability (www.flying-with-disability.org) is a comprehensive information source on airplane travel. **Avis**

Kids Family Travel—Virginia Is for Kids, Too

Virginia will bring history to life for your kids (and you, too) with a myriad of associations involving America's first heroes—Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Patrick Henry among them. Walking through old houses can bring on a case of the fidgets, but children are likely to be entertained by the living history demonstrations at **Jamestown Settlement, Yorktown Victory Center,** and the **Frontier Culture Museum** at Staunton.

Theme parks offer thrills and chills, not to mention food, fun, and entertainment, at **Kings Dominion, Busch Gardens Williamsburg,** and **Water Country USA.**

Virginia's family favorite is the **Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center** in Virginia Beach, where computers, exhibits, touch-tanks, and the museum's waterside setting help people of all ages understand the marine environment. Nearby in Norfolk, the **NAUTICUS** has interactive and "virtual adventures" featuring make-believe U.S. Navy ships. Across the harbor in Hampton, kids can see spaceships and watch IMAX movies at the **Virginia Air & Space Center.** They also will get a kick out of the **Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center** in the Hunt Country of northern Virginia, where the National Air and Space Museum displays 200 planes, 135 spacecraft, and the spaceship model that starred in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.*

Roanoke's **Virginia Museum of Transportation,** with its playground full of railroad cars, will keep the young and young-at-heart occupied. Richmond's **Children's Museum** and the **Science Museum of Virginia** offer activities and "touch me" exhibits.

It's not a museum, but after reading the story of *Misty of Chincoteague,* kids will adore a chance to ride a pony and see the action themselves at the **wild ponies' swim across Assateague Channel.**

To locate these and other kid-friendly attractions, accommodations, and restaurants, refer to the "Kids" icon throughout this guide.

Rent a Car (✆ **888/879-4273;** www.avis.com) has an "Avis Access" program that offers services for customers with special travel needs. These include specially outfitted vehicles with swivel seats, spinner knobs, and hand controls; mobility scooter rentals; and accessible bus service. Be sure to reserve well in advance.

British travelers should contact **Holiday Care** (✆ **0845-124-9971** in the U.K. only; www.holidaycare.org.uk) to access a wide range of travel information and resources for elderly people and those with disabilities.

SENIOR TRAVEL

Mention the fact that you're a senior when you make your reservations. All major airlines, car-rental firms, and most Virginia hotels offer discounts for seniors, especially members of **AARP,** 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (✆ **800/424-3410** or 202/434-2277; www.aarp.org). AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

A committee of deranged bureaucrats must have come up with the tongue-tying

name of the **America the Beautiful—National Park and Federal Recreational Lands Pass—Senior,** which is also known as the America the Beautiful Senior Pass, or among bureaucrats as the **Interagency Senior Pass.** Like the National Park Service's former Golden Age Passport, which is still honored, it gives anyone 62 years or older—and passengers in their noncommercial vehicles—entrance to national parks, monuments, and historic sites, plus national recreation areas and wildlife refuges managed by the U.S. Agriculture Department. The senior pass costs a one-time fee of $10, lasts for a lifetime, and must be purchased in person at any national park, recreation area, or wildlife refuge that charges an entrance fee (there are several of them in Virginia, so it can result in big savings). Besides free entry, it also offers a 50% discount on some federal-use fees charged for such facilities as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching, and tours—but not on fees charged by concessionaires. For more information, go to www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm or call ✆ **888/467-2757.**

STUDENT TRAVEL

It's worthwhile to bring along your valid high school or college ID, since many museums and other Virginia attractions have discounted admissions for students.

Check out its website of the **International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC;** www.istc.org) for comprehensive travel services information and details on how to get an **International Student Identity Card (ISIC),** which qualifies students for substantial savings on rail passes, plane tickets, entrance fees, and more. It also provides students with basic health and life insurance and a 24-hour help line. The card is valid for a maximum of 18 months.

Alcoholic beverages cannot be sold in the United States to anyone who is under 21, so if you're eligible and intend to imbibe, bring your driver's license or another photo identification with your date of birth.

TRAVELING WITH PETS

The **Virginia Tourism Corporation** website (www.virginia.org) provides information about pet-friendly events around the state and hotels and motels that accept pets. Policies vary from hotel to hotel, so call ahead to find out the rules. Many pet-friendly hotels charge an additional fee to guests who bring along their furry friends. Most B&Bs do not accept pets, but some of their owners have them, so ask before booking if you're allergic to animals.

Pets are allowed on short leashes in Virginia state parks but restricted in national parks (there are a few trails in Shenandoah National Park on which you can walk Fido). Check with each park's ranger station before setting out.

8 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

While Virginia has always been a pro-business state, and residential and commercial developments are eating into our green spaces, the state and the federal governments also have protected many thousands of acres of land in its natural condition. The Shenandoah National Park gets most of the ink, but it is dwarfed by our state parks and national forests.

But the conservation war is not won. As I write, some of our residents, including Oscar-winning actor Robert Duvall, are fighting plans to build a 138,000-square-foot Walmart store on the edge of The Wilderness Civil War Battlefield near Fredericksburg. "I believe in capitalism," Duvall said, "but I believe in capitalism with sensitivity."

Tips Take Nothing, Leave Nothing

When visiting our natural areas, we should all observe the golden rule of the wilderness: Leave nothing behind, and take away only memories and photos.

VIRGINIA GREEN

The Virginia Tourism Corporation and the state Department of Environmental Quality also are active. Together they have created **Virginia Green,** a program to promote sustainable tourism (www.virginia.org/green).

More than 300 hotels, motels, bed-and-breakfasts, inns, cabins, and other lodging have been certified as Virginia Green to acknowledge their efforts in conserving water and energy, recycling their waste, reducing or eliminating the use of Styrofoam, getting us to use our linen more than once before sending it to the laundry, and sponsoring events to promote a green environment.

The Department of Environmental Quality publishes a list on its website (www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/virginiagreen/lodging_participants.html). When making your plans, look for the Virginia Green logo on the approved establishments' own websites.

WHAT WE CAN DO

It's up to us travelers to practice **sustainable tourism,** which means being careful with the environments we explore, and respecting the communities we visit, including Virginia.

Two overlapping components of sustainable travel are **ecotourism** and **ethical tourism.** The **International Ecotourism Society** (**TIES;** www.ecotourism.org) defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. TIES suggests that ecotourists follow these principles:

- Minimize environmental impact.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation and for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- Support international human rights and labor agreements.

9 THE ACTIVE VACATION PLANNER

Although Virginia is best known for its multitude of historic sites, it's also home to a host of outdoor activities. In this section, I give you an overview of what I consider the best options available, where they are, and how to get statewide information. Please refer to the destination chapters for detailed information.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation publishes an annual ***Virginia Outdoors*** magazine that gives a comprehensive rundown of the activities available, a calendar of outdoor events, and a list of the many outfitters and tour companies operating in the state. Call ✆ **800/827-3325** for a copy, or see "Visitor Information" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13.

BICYCLING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

Bicycling is popular throughout Virginia, and with good reason. Most of the state's

scenic highways are open to bicycles. My favorites are the 17-mile **George Washington Memorial Parkway** between Arlington and Mount Vernon (see chapter 5), the 105-mile **Skyline Drive** above the Shenandoah Valley (see chapter 8), the 218-mile **Blue Ridge Parkway** in the Southwest Highlands (see chapter 9), and the 22-mile **Colonial Parkway** between Jamestown and Yorktown (see chapter 11).

The state also has three excellent "rails-to-trails" parks, in which old railroad beds have been turned into biking and hiking avenues. I often use northern Virginia's **Washington & Old Dominion Trail,** which begins in Arlington and ends 45 miles away at Purcellville in the rolling hills of the Hunt Country (see "Alexandria," in chapter 5).

In the "Outdoors in the Southwest Highlands" section of chapter 9, I describe two dramatic trails through some of the state's finest mountain scenery. The 34-mile **Virginia Creeper Trail,** one of the country's top bike paths, begins in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area high up on the flanks of Whitetop Mountain, Virginia's second-highest peak, and descends to Abingdon. Near Wytheville, the 55-mile **New River Trail** follows the New River, which actually is one of the world's oldest rivers. Outfitters along both trails rent bikes and provide shuttle services so you don't have to ride both ways—particularly handy on the Virginia Creeper Trail, which drops more than 3,000 feet from Whitetop Mountain to Damascus, near Abingdon.

Down on the coast, I love pedaling along the **Virginia Beach Boardwalk,** through the natural beauty of **First Landing State Park** and **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge,** and along all of the flat Eastern Shore roads (see chapter 12).

I've never attempted them, but Virginia is crossed by sections of three major interstate bicycle routes. The Maine-to-Virginia **Route 1** runs 150 miles from Arlington to Richmond and connects to 130 miles of the Virginia-to-Florida **Route 17** from Richmond to the North Carolina line at Suffolk. Some 500 miles of the **TransAmerican Bicycle Trail (Rte. 76)** runs from the Kentucky line to Yorktown, including a stretch through Mount Rogers National Recreation Area in the Southwest Highlands. For strip maps of these routes, contact **Adventure Cycling Association,** P.O. Box 8308, Missoula, MT 59802 (✆ **800/755-2453** or 406/721-1776; fax 406/721-8754; www.adv-cycling.org).

Mountain bikers will find plenty of trails, especially in Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and in the George Washington and Jefferson national forests, which occupy parts of the Shenandoah Valley (see chapter 8) and the Southwest Highlands (see chapter 9). For details about the latter, contact the **George Washington and Jefferson National Forests,** 210 Franklin Rd. SW, Roanoke, VA 24004 (✆ **540/265-6054;** www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/gwj).

Mountain Bike Virginia, by Scott Adams (Beachway Press, 1995), is a very handy atlas to Virginia's best trails, with excellent maps.

The **Virginia Department of Transportation's Bicycle Coordinator,** 1401 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **800/835-1203** or 804/786-2964; www.virginiadot.org), publishes the annual *Virginia Bicycling Guide,* which describes Virginia's routes and trials and lists local bike clubs and relevant publications. Contact the department or the Virginia Tourism Corporation (see "Visitor Information" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13) for a free copy.

BIRD-WATCHING

The big bird-watching draws in Virginia are waterfowl nesting in the flatlands and marshes along the coast on the Atlantic Flyway. Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague Island and Back Bay

National Wildlife Refuge below Virginia Beach offer first-rate bird-watching. Chincoteague is especially good on Thanksgiving weekend, the only time the refuge's back roads are open to vehicles. See chapter 12.

BOATING

The Chesapeake Bay and its many tributaries, including the Potomac, Rappahannock, York, and James rivers, are perfect for boating. In fact, you can come away from eastern Virginia with the impression that every other home has a boat and trailer sitting in the yard. Marinas abound on the Northern Neck (see chapter 6), and you can rent boats in Hampton Roads and over on the Eastern Shore, where the back bays of Chincoteague await to be explored from a fish's-eye view (see chapter 12).

A detailed map showing public access to the Chesapeake and its tributaries is available from the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation,** 203 Governor St., Ste. 302, Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **804/786-1712;** www.dcr.state.va.us).

CANOEING, KAYAKING & RIVER RAFTING

Kayakers and canoeists will find easy, quiet paddling on the backwater creeks of the Northern Neck (see chapter 6) and in Hampton Roads and on the Eastern Shore (see chapter 12). Outfitters in Virginia Beach and Chincoteague rent both canoes and kayaks and offer guided excursions of the creeks and back bays, and you can go dolphin-watching with them off Virginia Beach.

Depending on how much rain has dropped recently, the best white-water rafting may be on the James River at Scottsville near Charlottesville (see chapter 7). White-water rafting is most likely during spring and late fall.

The best canoeing and kayaking is on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River between Front Royal Luray and Lexington (see "Rafting, Canoeing & Kayaking on the Shenandoah" on p. 159). When the water is low during summer, multitudes forget canoes and rafts and lazily float down the rivers in inner tubes.

FISHING

The waters that are so great for boating are stocked with a wide array of fish. The best rivers for fishing include the South Fork of the Shenandoah near Front Royal for smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish; the James between Richmond and Norfolk for smallmouth bass and catfish; the New near Wytheville for walleye, yellow perch, musky, and smallmouth bass; the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg to the Northern Neck for smallmouth bass and catfish; and the Chickahominy near Williamsburg for largemouth bass, chain pickerel, bluegill, white perch, and channel catfish.

The mountains have 2,800 miles of trout streams, many stocked annually. Guides are available in Lexington (see chapter 8) and Abingdon (see chapter 9).

From Virginia Beach and Chincoteague you can go deep-sea fishing on charter and party boats in search of bluefish, flounder, cobia, gray and spotted trout, sharks, and other ocean dwellers (see chapter 12).

The **Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries,** 4010 W. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23230 (✆ **804/367-1000;** www.dgif.state.va.us), publishes an annual freshwater-fishing guide and regulations pamphlet detailing licensing requirements and regulations. Available at most sporting-goods stores, marinas, and bait shops, licenses are required except on the first Saturday and Sunday in June, which are free fishing days.

GOLF

You can play golf almost anytime and anywhere in Virginia, given the state's mild climate and more than 130 courses,

but serious duffers head to **Williamsburg** and the Golden Horseshoe, Green, and Gold courses at the Williamsburg Inn, and the links at Kingsmill Resort (see chapter 11). An hour's drive away, the PGA-owned Virginia Beach National Golf Club in **Virginia Beach** is one of the country's best upscale links (p. 304). Up in the mountains, the Homestead's beautiful course in **Hot Springs** has the nation's oldest first tee, in continuous use since 1890 (p. 176). Wintergreen Resort near **Charlottesville** also has an excellent course (p. 128), as does Lansdowne Resort near **Leesburg** (p. 90).

The best source for information is the Virginia Tourism Corporation's annual *Virginia Golf Guide,* which lists and describes the state's courses (see "Visitor Information" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13).

HIKING & BACKPACKING

The same trails that make Virginia so popular with bicyclists also make it a hiker's heaven. The state's rails-to-trails paths along old railroad beds (see "Bicycling & Mountain Biking," above) are both good and easy. Some 450 miles of the **Appalachian Trail** snake through Virginia, nearly climbing Mount Rogers and paralleling the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Skyline Drive in many places. The best backcountry trails are in **Shenandoah National Park** (see chapter 8) and **Mount Rogers National Recreation Area** (see chapter 9), with less-traveled trails in the George Washington and Jefferson national forests.

For information and maps of the Appalachian Trail, contact the **Appalachian Trail Conservancy,** P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807 (✆ **304/535-6331;** www.atconf.org).

Four good books give trail-by-trail descriptions. *The Trails of Virginia: Hiking the Old Dominion,* by Allen de Hart (University of North Carolina Press, 1995), is still the most comprehensive guide. *The Hiker's Guide to Virginia,* by Randy Johnson (Falcon Press, 1992), is a slimmer, easier-to-carry volume, as is *Hiking Virginia's National Forests,* by Karin Wuertz-Schaeffer (Globe Pequot Press, 1994), which covers trails in the George Washington and Jefferson national forests in the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Highlands. Of more recent vintage, *Hiking Shenandoah National Park,* by Bert and Jane Gildart (Falcon Press, 2006), describes and maps the park's best trails.

HORSEBACK RIDING

Equestrians will find stables with horses to rent to ride on hundreds of miles of public horse trails in Virginia, the majority of them in the Shenandoah Valley and the Southwest Highlands. The **Shenandoah National Park** has its own Skyland Stables, from which you can take guided trail rides atop the Blue Ridge (see chapter 8). The granddaddy of all trails, the **Virginia Highlands Horse Trail,** runs the length of Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, which has campgrounds especially for horse owners (see chapter 9). Horses are also permitted on the Virginia Creeper Trail and the New River Trail. You can rent horses at the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and along the New River Trail (see chapter 9). Ironically, few stables rent horses in northern Virginia's Hunt Country, where just about everyone who rides owns a horse (see chapter 5).

The **Virginia Horse Council,** 2799 Stratford Rd., Richmond, VA 23225 (✆ **804/330-0345;** www.virginiahorse.com), publishes a list of public horse trails and stables statewide.

WATERSPORTS

To indulge your passion for surfing, jetskiing, wave-running, sailing, or scuba diving, head for Virginia Beach, which has it all in abundance. See chapter 12.

10 ESCORTED GENERAL-INTEREST TOURS

Escorted tours are structured group tours, with a group leader. The price usually includes everything from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation.

Several travel companies offer escorted bus tours of historic sites in both Virginia and southeastern Pennsylvania. These 1-week or longer tours usually start in Washington, D.C, and visit Mount Vernon, Fredericksburg, Williamsburg, Richmond, Charlottesville, and the Shenandoah National Park. From there they go on to Gettysburg and the Amish Country in Pennsylvania before ending in Philadelphia. You'll have to pay extra to get to Washington, D.C., and home from Philadelphia, but meals, lodging, and bus transportation are included in the tour prices.

Check out **Trafalgar Tours** (✆ **866/544-4434;** www.trafalgartours.com), **Tauck Tours** (✆ **800/788-7855;** www.tauck.com), and **Mayflower Tours** (✆ **800/323-7604;** www.mayflowertours.com) to find out what they're offering when you plan to travel.

Despite the fact that escorted tours require big deposits and predetermine hotels, restaurants, and itineraries, many people derive security and peace of mind from the structure they offer. Escorted tours let you sit back and enjoy the trip without having to drive or worry about details. They take you to the maximum number of sights in the minimum amount of time with the least amount of hassle. They're particularly convenient for people with limited mobility and they can be a great way to make new friends.

On the downside, you'll have little opportunity for serendipitous interactions with locals. The tours can be jampacked with activities, leaving little room for individual sightseeing, whim, or adventure. And they focus on the most touristy sites, so you miss out on many a lesser-known gem.

For more information on escorted general-interest tours, including questions to ask before booking your trip, see www.frommers.com/planning.

1-DAY BUS TOURS

During the warm months you can also make 1-day escorted bus tours from Washington, D.C., to Charlottesville with the venerable **Gray Line** (✆ **800/862-1400** or 301/386-8300; fax 301/386-2024; www.graylinedc.com). The trip costs $90 for adults, $60 for children 3 to 11, including admission to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello home (p. 132). The company occasionally offers 1-day excursions from D.C. to Williamsburg.

11 STAYING CONNECTED

TELEPHONES

Generally, hotel surcharges on long-distance and local calls are astronomical, so you're better off using your **cellphone** or a **public pay telephone.** (One hotelier told me recently that he isn't making any profit on phone calls because most guests now use their own cellphones instead of making calls from their rooms.)

If you don't have a cellphone, you can buy **prepaid calling cards** in denominations up to $50 at many convenience groceries and packaging services. For international visitors these can be the least expensive way to call home. Many public pay phones at airports and elsewhere now accept American Express, MasterCard, and Visa credit cards. However you pay,

local calls made from pay phones in Virginia cost 35¢ (no pennies, please).

Most long-distance and international calls can be dialed directly from any phone. **For calls within the United States and to Canada,** dial 1 followed by the area code and the seven-digit number. **For other international calls,** dial 011 followed by the country code, city code, and the number you are calling.

Calls to area codes **800, 888, 877,** and **866** are toll-free. However, calls to area codes **700** and **900** (chat lines, bulletin boards, "dating" services, and so on) can be very expensive—usually a charge of 95¢ to $3 or more per minute, and they sometimes have minimum charges that can run as high as $15 or more.

For **reversed-charge or collect calls,** and for person-to-person calls, dial the number 0 and then the area code and number; an operator will come on the line, and you should specify whether you are calling collect, person to person, or both. If your operator-assisted call is international, ask for the overseas operator.

For **local directory assistance** ("information"), dial 411; for long-distance information, dial 1, then the appropriate area code and 555-1212.

CELLPHONES

Just because your cellphone works at home doesn't mean it'll work everywhere in Virginia, thanks to our nation's fragmented cellphone system. One of my cellphones using GSM (Global System for Mobiles), which is used by much of the rest of the world, can go dead out in the country, while my CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) model works perfectly well. It's a good bet that your phone will work in major cities whatever system it uses, and you will have near-statewide coverage with Verizon Wireless, which uses CDMA. On the other hand, AT&T, T-Mobile, and Sprint can be weak or disappear altogether in rural areas. Take a look at your wireless company's coverage map on its website before heading out.

If you need to stay in touch at a destination where you know your phone won't work, **rent** a phone that does from **InTouch USA** (✆ **800/872-7626;** www.intouchglobal.com) or a rental car location, but beware that you'll pay $1 a minute or more for airtime.

I find it less expensive to buy a prepaid "throwaway" cellphone, such as from **Tracfone** (www.tracfone.com) or its subsidiary **Net10** (www.net10.com). You can order from the websites in advance, or pick up a Tracfone and a prepaid card at national drugstore chains such as CVS and Rite Aid, or at the ubiquitous Dollar General outlets (rare is the Virginia town that doesn't have a cheapo Dollar General). Walmart, Target, Kmart, and Safeway are Tracfone and Net10 retailers.

Tracfone models cost as little as $10, with prepaid cards beginning at $20 for 60 minutes of nationwide airtime good for 60 days. Net10 phones start at $30 and include 300 minutes of nationwide airtime good for 60 days. Neither charges extra for domestic long distance.

INTERNET/E-MAIL

Without Your Own Computer

Most **public libraries** in Virginia offer Internet access free or for a small charge. **Hotel business centers** have access, too, but often charge exorbitant rates.

To find cybercafes in your destination, check **www.cybercafe.com**. Most major airports have **Internet kiosks** that provide basic Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices. Check out copy shops like **FedEx Office** (formerly, FedEx Kinko's), which offers computer stations with fully loaded software (as well as Wi-Fi).

With Your Own Computer

I've been writing Frommer's guides so long that I remember when hotels competed by equipping their rooms with hair dryers and coffeemakers, which are pretty much de rigueur today. Now they try to one-up each other by providing high-speed Internet access for their guests' laptops. In fact, most hotels and motels in Virginia, regardless of price, offer wireless (Wi-Fi, for wireless fidelity), and some also have high-speed dataport connections for laptops, the latter using an Ethernet network cable. The service is complimentary at most hotels and bed-and-breakfasts, but others—especially large chains such as Marriott and Hilton—charge about $10 a night.

Many airports, cafes, and especially coffee shops are Wi-Fi hotspots, offering free or low-cost high-speed access. Wi-Fi is even found in some campgrounds, RV parks, and entire neighborhoods, such as King Street in Old Town Alexandria. To find public Wi-Fi hotspots, go to **www.jiwire.com**; its Wi-Fi Finder holds the world's largest directory of public wireless hotspots.

Most laptops sold today have built-in wireless capability, but wherever you go, bring a **connection kit** of the right power and phone adapters, a spare phone cord, and a spare Ethernet network cable—or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

For information on electrical currency conversions, see "Electricity," in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13.

Voice-over Internet Protocol (VOIP)

If you have Web access while traveling, you might consider a broadband-based telephone service (in technical terms, **Voice-over Internet Protocol,** or **VoIP**) such as Skype (www.skype.com) or Vonage (www.vonage.com), which allows you to make free international calls if you use their services from your laptop or in a cybercafe, and the people you're calling also use the service. Skype also has a "Skype Out" service which lets you make calls from your computer to landlines for a small per-minute fee (depending on which country you are calling). Calling cellphones is more expensive. Check the sites for details.

12 TIPS ON ACCOMMODATIONS

Virginia has a vast array of accommodations, from rock-bottom roadside motels to some of the nation's finest resorts. Every national chain is present here in all price categories. So whether you spend a pittance or a bundle depends on your budget and tastes. You can enjoy "champagne tastes on a beer budget"—if you plan carefully and possess a little knowledge of how the hotel industry works.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation publishes a directory of all the state's accommodations (see "Visitor Information" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13).

SURFING FOR HOTELS

In addition to the online travel-booking sites **Travelocity.com, Expedia.com, Orbitz.com, Priceline.com,** and **Hotwire.com,** you can book hotels through **Hotels.com, Quikbook.com,** and **Travelaxe.com.**

Go to **TripAdvisor.com** or **HotelShark.com** for helpful independent consumer reviews of hotels and resort properties. (Anyone, including hotel owners themselves and "guests" who have never stayed at a property, can post reviews on these sites, so I read them with a proverbial grain of salt.)

After I've determined a price quoted on the general sites, I *always* go directly to my chosen hotel's site to see if it is offering an **Internet special.** Often these deals don't show up on the major travel sites.

I also always **get a confirmation number** and **printout** of any online booking transaction.

SAVING ON YOUR HOTEL ROOM

The price ranges in this book are what's known in the industry as **rack rates;** that is, the minimum and maximum rates that hotels charge for rooms and suites.

These price ranges are meaningful only for comparative purposes since most hotels change their rates almost daily—sometimes hourly—depending on how many people are booked for a particular night. In all likelihood, you will not know how much you will pay until you book a room for a particular date.

Hardly anybody pays rack rate these days, so here are some tricks to lower the cost of your room:

- **Ask about special rates or other discounts.** Always ask whether a room less expensive than the first one quoted is available or whether any special rates apply to you. You may qualify for corporate, student, military, senior, or other discounts. Mention membership in AAA, AARP, frequent-flier programs, or trade unions, which may entitle you to special deals as well. Find out the hotel policy on children—do kids stay free in the room or is there a special rate?
- **Dial direct.** When booking a room in a chain hotel, you'll often get a better deal by calling the individual hotel's reservation desk rather than the chain's main number.
- **Book online.** Many hotels offer Internet-only discounts, or supply rooms to Priceline.com, Hotwire.com, or Expedia.com at rates much lower than the ones you can get through the hotel itself. See "Surfing for Hotels," above.
- **Remember the law of supply and demand.** Resort hotels are most crowded and therefore most expensive on weekends, so discounts are usually available for midweek stays. Business hotels in downtown locations are busiest during the week, so you can expect big discounts over the weekend. Many hotels have high-season and low-season prices, and booking the day after high season ends can mean big discounts.
- **Look into group or long-stay discounts.** If you come as part of a large group, you should be able to negotiate a bargain rate since the hotel can then guarantee occupancy in a number of rooms. Likewise, if you're planning a long stay (at least 5 days), you might qualify for a discount. As a general rule, expect 1 night free after a 7-night stay.
- **Sidestep excess charges and hidden costs.** When you book a room, ask whether the hotel charges for parking. Use your own cellphone, pay phones, or prepaid phone cards instead of dialing direct from hotel phones, which usually have exorbitant rates. And don't be tempted by the room's minibar offerings: Most hotels charge through the nose for water, soda, and snacks. Finally, ask about local taxes and service charges, which can increase the cost of a room by 15% or more. If a hotel insists upon tacking on a surprise surcharge that wasn't mentioned at check-in or a "resort fee" for amenities you didn't use, you can often make a case for getting it removed.
- **Book an efficiency room.** A room with a kitchenette allows you to shop for groceries and cook meals. This is a big money saver, especially for families on long stays.

- Consider enrolling in **hotel "frequent-stay" programs,** which are upping the ante lately to win the loyalty of repeat customers. Frequent guests can now accumulate points or credits to earn free hotel nights, airline miles, in-room amenities, merchandise, tickets to concerts and events, and discounts on sporting facilities. Perks are awarded not only by many chain hotels and motels (Hilton HHonors, Marriott Rewards, Wyndham ByRequest, to name a few), but individual inns and B&Bs. Many chain hotels partner with other hotel chains, car-rental firms, airlines, and credit card companies to give consumers additional incentive to do repeat business.

LANDING THE BEST ROOM

Somebody has to get the best room in the house, and it might as well be you. You can start by joining the hotel's frequent-guest program, which may make you eligible for upgrades. A hotel-branded credit card usually gives its owner "silver" or "gold" status in frequent-guest programs for free.

Always ask about a corner room. They're often larger and quieter, with more windows and light, and they often cost the same as standard rooms. When you make your reservation, ask if the hotel is renovating; if it is, request a room away from the construction. If you're a light sleeper, request a quiet room away from vending or ice machines, elevators, restaurants, bars, and discos. Ask for a room that has most recently been renovated or redecorated.

If you aren't happy with your room when you arrive, ask for another one. Most lodgings will be willing to accommodate you.

BED & BREAKFASTS

Unfortunately I have room in these pages to mention only a few standouts among Virginia's 200-plus bed-and-breakfasts. Most of them are excellent properties adorned with antiques or quality reproductions, luxurious touches like fresh flowers and top-drawer linens and toiletries, and near-gourmet breakfasts. Some even add whirlpool tubs to their bathrooms. All these niceties come with a price, so most bed-and-breakfasts aren't inexpensive. Nor are they for everyone, since you'll be sharing a home with strangers—with whom you might have to make small talk over breakfast. On the other hand, you don't have to go out for breakfast, and the hosts are usually fonts of current local information. In fact, B&B owners told me about many of the restaurants I recommend in these pages.

With a few exceptions, I only recommend properties which are members of the **Bed & Breakfast Association of Virginia (BBAV),** P.O. Box 1077, Standardsville, VA 22973 (✆ **888/660-2228** or 540/672-6700; www.innvirginia.com). The BBAV inspects and approves the establishments it promotes, so you are unlikely to stay in a dump. Membership also indicates that the owners are serious about their business and are not operating a B-&-B merely to take advantage of tax breaks. BBAV publishes an annual directory of its members and lists them on its website.

Regional associations with useful websites include the following:

- **Alexandria & Arlington Bed & Breakfast Network,** P.O. Box 25319, Arlington, VA 22202 (✆ **888/549-3415** or 703/549-3415; www.aabbn.com)
- The Hunt Country's **Loudoun County Bed & Breakfast Guild** (✆ **866/771-2597;** www.loudounbandb.com)

- Charlottesville's **Guesthouses Reservation Service, Inc.** (✆ **434/979-7264;** www.va-guesthouses.com)
- **Bed and Breakfasts of the Historic Shenandoah Valley** (no phone; www.bbhsv.org)
- **Williamsburg Bed & Breakfast Network** (no phone; www.bandbwilliamsburg.com)

Most local visitor centers include bed-and-breakfasts on their websites or will send you a list of those in their area.

4

Suggested Virginia Itineraries

Virginia is a relatively large and varied state with numerous attractions across its length and breadth. Where you go and what you see will depend on your special interests—whether you're into history or into hiking, for example. Ideally you should use the "Best of Virginia" chapter to work out a route that appeals to you. I have suggested a few itineraries below that will take you throughout Virginia, to its Colonial-era attractions and its Civil War battlefields, to some of its vineyards, and up the Shenandoah with a little Shakespeare thrown in. I've also suggested how parents can travel with their children in Virginia without going stark, raving mad.

1 VIRGINIA'S REGIONS IN BRIEF

First of all, you must decide where to go. I can't make that decision for you, but I can briefly tell you what the state has to offer.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

My home area in northern Virginia is the fastest-growing, wealthiest, and most densely populated part of the state—with horrendous traffic to prove it. Our northern counties once were a suburban bedroom for workers in Washington, D.C., but not anymore. Areas such as Tysons Corner have become de facto cities in their own right, with employment in high-tech service industries outstripping that of the federal government. Just across the Potomac from the nation's capital, **Arlington** is best known for its national cemetery. The historic Old Town district of **Alexandria** offers fascinating daytime walks as well as good restaurants. To the south lie the Potomac plantations, including George Washington's **Mount Vernon.** To the west, I enjoy driving out to Virginia's hilly **Hunt Country,** where the first major battle of the Civil War was fought at **Manassas.**

FREDERICKSBURG & THE NORTHERN NECK

I always look forward to visiting **Fredericksburg,** where quaint cobblestone streets and historic houses recall America's first heroes—George Washington, James Monroe, John Paul Jones—as does the quiet Northern Neck farmland, where Washington and Robert E. Lee were born. Military buffs love to explore Fredericksburg's Civil War battlefields.

CHARLOTTESVILLE

Located in the rolling Piedmont hills known as "Mr. Jefferson's country," **Charlottesville** boasts President Thomas Jefferson's magnificent estate, Monticello, as well as the University of Virginia, which he designed. Drives south bring you to Poplar Forest, his beloved retreat; Patrick Henry's final home at Red Hill; and Appomattox Court House, where the Civil War ended when Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant.

THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Some of Virginia's most striking scenic views are from the **Skyline Drive,** which follows the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains through magnificent **Shenandoah National Park,** where you can explore a host of hiking paths, including part of the Maine-to-Georgia Appalachian Trail. Down below, charming towns like **Winchester, Front Royal, Luray, Staunton,** and **Lexington** evoke the Civil War, which flowed over the rolling countryside of the Shenandoah Valley, the South's breadbasket. In another valley high in the Allegheny Mountains to the west lie the famous mineral waters of **Warm Springs** and **Hot Springs.**

THE SOUTHWEST HIGHLANDS

Beyond the vibrant railroad city of **Roanoke** rise the highlands of Virginia's southwestern extremity, a land of forests, waterfalls, and streams seemingly untouched since Daniel Boone led settlers along the Great Wilderness Road into Kentucky. The **Blue Ridge Parkway** wanders along its eastern border. Here the state's highest point, **Mount Rogers,** sits surrounded by a national recreation area teeming with trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Down in the Great Valley of Virginia, the quaint town of **Abingdon** features the famous Barter Theatre, begun during the Great Depression when its company traded tickets for hams.

RICHMOND

The state capital has few rivals among U.S. cities for its historic associations, among them St. John's Church, where Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty, or give me death." But it was Richmond's role as the rebel capital during the Civil War that brings visitors to the Museum of the Confederacy and the Richmond and Petersburg battlefields. Fine arts and science museums, cafes, lively concerts, and theater add to Richmond's cosmopolitan ambience, and children can get their kicks at nearby Paramount's Kings Dominion amusement park.

WILLIAMSBURG, YORKTOWN & JAMESTOWN

Coastal Virginia's "Historic Triangle" is one of the country's most visited areas, and with good reason. **Jamestown** is where America's first permanent English settlers arrived in 1607 (and some of my own ancestors in 1613). **Williamsburg** immaculately re-creates Virginia's Colonial capital, and **Yorktown** commemorates the last battle of the American Revolution. Adding to the triangle's allure are theme parks and world-class discount shopping. From here it's an easy excursion to see the recovered gun turret of the USS *Monitor* at one of the nation's premier maritime museums in the shipbuilding city of **Newport News.** Historic **Hampton** may be the country's oldest continuous English-speaking settlement, but it boasts a modern, high-tech air and space museum.

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA BEACH & THE EASTERN SHORE

The great harbor of Hampton Roads is home to the resurgent cities of **Norfolk** and **Portsmouth.** You can play in the surf at **Virginia Beach,** whose boardwalk and 20 miles of sandy beach are lined with hotels, and commune with nature in **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge** and remote **False Cape State Park.** Drive across the 17-mile Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel to the Eastern Shore, an unspoiled sanctuary noted for the fishing village of **Chincoteague** and nearby **Assateague Island,** whose wildlife refuge and national seashore have protected the famous wild ponies and prevented any development on almost 40 miles of pristine beach.

2 THE GRAND TOUR OF VIRGINIA IN 2 WEEKS

This route takes you to all of Virginia's top attractions: the Shenandoah National Park, the Shenandoah Valley towns of Staunton and Lexington, Charlottesville, Richmond, Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown, Virginia Beach, Fredericksburg, and George Washington's Mount Vernon home near Alexandria's historic Old Town district. You can expand any section of this route into a week's tour of one particular area of Virginia. For instance, you can spend a week in the Shenandoah Valley by staying 2 or more nights in, say, Winchester, Shenandoah National Park, Staunton, or Lexington. Charlottesville-Richmond-Williamsburg is another example.

This tour begins and ends at Washington Dulles International Airport in northern Virginia, the state's major air gateway, and essentially follows Interstates 66, 81, 64, and 95 to make a loop around the northern and central portions of the state. If you're driving to Virginia from the south, start in Williamsburg and work backward.

Days ❶ & ❷: The Hunt Country ★★

As you leave Dulles airport, first go south on Va. 28 to the National Air and Space Museum's magnificent **Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center** (p. 88). Then head to **Leesburg,** seeing the sights in town before retiring for the night. The next morning drive to Middleburg, where you can browse its hip main street and have lunch. Spend the afternoon exploring the back roads, sampling the vintages at the nearby vineyards, and crossing the mountains to **Winchester.**

Day ❸: Winchester ★ to Luray

Spend the morning seeing Winchester's sights, especially the **Museum of the Shenandoah Valley** (p. 152), which provides a fine introduction to the valley. In the afternoon, drive through **Strasburg** and **Front Royal** on your way to **Luray,** where you can go underground at **Luray Caverns** (p. 163). Spend the night in Luray or drive on up into the Shenandoah National Park.

Day ❹: The Shenandoah National Park ★★★

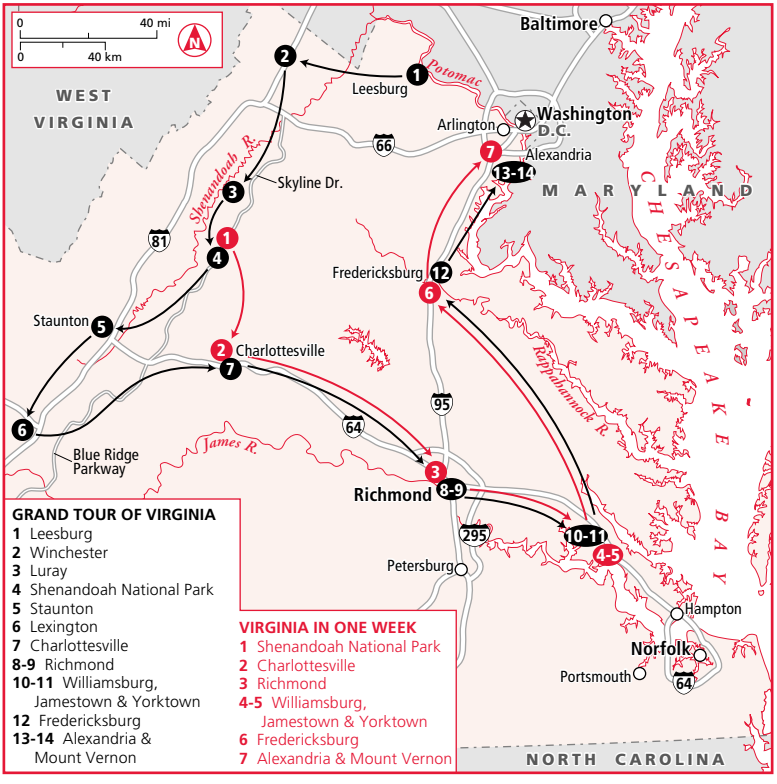
From Luray, drive east on U.S. 211 to the mountaintop entrance to **Shenandoah National Park** (p. 143). Go south on the **Skyline Drive** into the park's Central District, its most scenic and best equipped. Take in the views, hike the trails, or go horseback riding (be sure to call the stables in advance for riding reservations). Spend the night at the park's **Big Meadows Lodge** (p. 149) or **Skyland Lodge** (p. 149).

Day ❺: Staunton ★★★

The next morning, take the Skyline Drive south to I-64, and then west to **Staunton,** one of Virginia's best small towns. Spend the afternoon visiting the **Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library at His Birthplace** (p. 169). See Shakespeare performed at the marvelous **Blackfriars Playhouse** (p. 168).

Day ❻: Lexington ★★★

Charming **Lexington** has more attractions than any other town in the Shenandoah Valley, so arrive in time to spend at least an afternoon visiting the **George C. Marshall Museum and Research Library** (p. 180) and Stonewall Jackson's stuffed horse in the **Virginia Military Institute Museum** (p. 182).



Day 7: Charlottesville ★★★

I-81 and I-64 will speed you to Thomas Jefferson's hometown of **Charlottesville,** or you can take the slow but much more scenic route via the **Blue Ridge Parkway** from Buena Vista to Waynesboro, and then I-64 east. Either way, spend the afternoon touring the **University of Virginia** (p. 134) and other downtown Charlottesville attractions. The next morning, beat the crowds to Jefferson's magnificent **Monticello** (p. 132). Have lunch at nearby **Michie Tavern** (p. 131) then visit President James Monroe's **Ash Lawn–Highland** home (p. 131). When finished, take I-64 east to Richmond for the night.

Days 8 & 9: Richmond ★★

You'll have a busy 2 days seeing the sites from Richmond's days as the capital of the Confederacy. Begin at the **American Civil War Center Museum** (p. 230), which expertly explains the war's origins from the Northern, Southern, and African-American perspectives. It's next door to the **Richmond National Battlefield Park**'s own museum (p. 231). Next, head to the **Museum and White House of the Confederacy** (p. 230). On the second day take in **St. John's Episcopal Church** (p. 232), where Patrick Henry made his "give me liberty, or give me death" speech, and Richmond's host of specialized museums.

Days ⑩ & ⑪: Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown ★★★

Two days are barely enough to scratch the surface of Virginia's "Historic Triangle." Devote one of them to the lovingly restored **Colonial Williamsburg** historic district, finishing with dinner at one of the ancient taverns. **Jamestown** will take up the next morning; **Yorktown** that afternoon. If you have children, an alternate choice for one of your days here is **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** (p. 258). If you have a few days to spare, you can spend them relaxing at **Virginia Beach.**

Day ⑫: Fredericksburg ★★★

Depart Williamsburg early and drive north via U.S. 17 to **Fredericksburg,** the boyhood home of George Washington, where you can spend the afternoon exploring **his mother's home** (p. 102) and the fascinating **apothecary of Hugh Mercer** (p. 100), his friend and fellow warrior. Spend the next morning at the Civil War battlefields. Then take I-95 north to Alexandria, with a stop at the **National Museum of the Marine Corps** in the Triangle (p. 103).

Days ⑬ & ⑭: Alexandria & Mount Vernon ★★★

George Washington, Robert E. Lee, and a host of other notables strode the cobblestone streets of **Old Town Alexandria,** the city's beautifully restored historic district beside the Potomac River. Old Town's sights will take most of a day to explore. Spend the next day south of Alexandria at Washington's home at **Mount Vernon** (p. 81). Old Town is a shuttle ride back to Dulles airport.

3 VIRGINIA IN 1 WEEK

Although you'll be pressing to see everything in Virginia in 2 weeks (Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown together can easily eat up a week), you can see the tip of the iceberg in a week if you really hurry and see only the top attractions. In devising this route, I have eliminated all but the best.

Day ❶: The Shenandoah National Park ★★★

Drive directly to the entrance of the Central District of **Shenandoah National Park** (p. 143), on U.S. 211, at Thornton Gap. Go south on the **Skyline Drive,** take in the views, hike, or go horseback riding. Spend the night at the park's **Big Meadows Lodge** (p. 149) or **Skyland Lodge** (p. 149).

Day ❷: Charlottesville ★★★

Drive south on the Skyline Drive to U.S. 33 east, then to U.S. 29, and then south to **Charlottesville.** Spend the afternoon touring the **University of Virginia** (p. 134) and other downtown Charlottesville attractions. The next morning beat the crowds to Jefferson's magnificent **Monticello** (p. 132). Do lunch at nearby **Michie Tavern** (p. 131) before visiting President James Monroe's **Ash Lawn–Highland** (p. 131). When done, follow I-64 east to Richmond.

Day ❸: Richmond ★★

It will be all you can do in a day to visit the **Museum and White House of the Confederacy** (p. 230), the **Richmond National Battlefield Park** (p. 231), **St. John's Episcopal Church** (p. 232), and the capital city's other top sights.

Days ❹ & ❺: Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown ★★★

Spend one of these days in **Colonial Williamsburg,** the next seeing **Jamestown** and **Yorktown.**

Day ❻: Fredericksburg ★★★

Depart Williamsburg early and drive north to **Fredericksburg,** where you can spend the rest of the morning exploring George Washington's boyhood home. Tour the Civil War battlefields in the afternoon.

Day ❼: Alexandria & Mount Vernon ★★★

Beat the crowds by spending the morning seeing the historic sights in Old Town Alexandria and the afternoon at Washington's **Mount Vernon** plantation (p. 81).

4 VIRGINIA FOR FAMILIES

This 1-week route assumes you will be traveling around Virginia with children and don't want to spend most of your time cooped up with them in the same vehicle. Visiting places like George Washington's Mount Vernon and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello are great educational experiences, but the young ones won't think all that 18th-century furniture is particularly cool. Accordingly, this itinerary takes you to three areas where both you and they will be entertained.

Days ❶, ❷ & ❸: Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown ★★★

Although **Colonial Williamsburg** is a great big history lesson, it also has many activities especially for children, such as taking dancing lessons in the Governor's Mansion and marching with the local "militia." You can also keep the kids thoroughly entertained at **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** (p. 258) and **Water Country USA** (p. 259). Costumed interpreters at **Jamestown Settlement** also will keep them occupied.

Days ❹ & ❺: Virginia Beach ★

Most kids love a day or two at the beach, and **Virginia Beach** is a good place for that. There are lifeguards on duty, and the surf usually isn't threatening. On the way from Williamsburg, stop at the **Virginia Air & Space Center** in Hampton (p. 283), where they'll love the aircraft and IMAX movie. At the beach, don't miss taking them to the **Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center** (p. 309), with its touch tanks and "harbor seal splash."

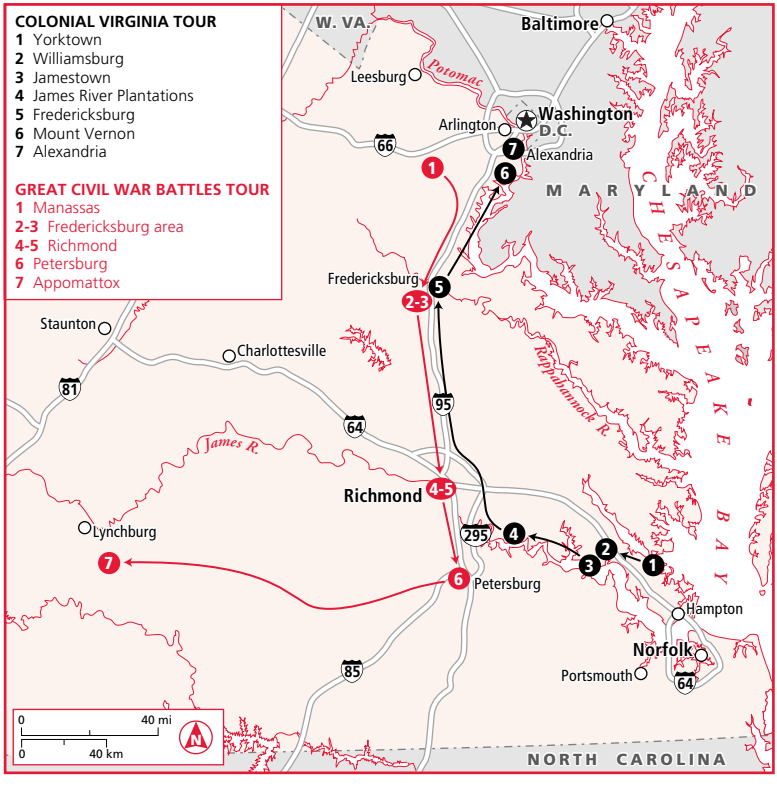
Days ❻ & ❼: Chincoteague & Assateague Islands ★★★

A drive across the 17-mile-long **Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel** and up the Delmarva Peninsula will take them to **Chincoteague Island,** where Marguerite Henry based her children's book, *Misty of Chincoteague.* You and the kids can see the wild ponies grazing in the national wildlife refuge and national seashore on **Assateague Island,** and they can actually ride one during summer at the **Chincoteague Pony Centre** (p. 320).

5 COLONIAL VIRGINIA IN 1 WEEK

This route follows the progress of Virginia's Colonial settlers in 1607 from Jamestown to Williamsburg, and then through the great tobacco plantations they built along the state's great tidal rivers to Fredericksburg and Alexandria.

Colonial Virginia & Civil War Virginia



Days ❶, ❷ & ❸: Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown ★★★

As noted in the Grand Tour, above, you must hurry to see the Historic Triangle in 2 days, and you'll be busy even with 3 days on your hands. Spend two of them in the beautifully restored **Colonial Williamsburg,** the other visiting the original settlement at **Jamestown** and the great battlefield at **Yorktown,** where Lord Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington.

Day ❹: The James River Plantations

This morning you can tour **Berkeley** (p. 279) and **Shirley** (p. 279), two of the great James River plantations on Va. 5 between Williamsburg and Richmond. Then head up I-295 and I-95 to Fredericksburg.

Day ❺: Fredericksburg ★★★

You can spend a leisurely day on the **Fredericksburg** streets tread by George Washington, Robert E. Lee, James Monroe, and Thomas Jefferson.

Days ❻ & ❼: Mount Vernon & Alexandria ★★★

Take I-95 north from Fredericksburg to Woodbridge, and then U.S. 1 north and Va. 235 east to **Mount Vernon** (p. 81), Washington's magnificent plantation. It

and perhaps one more Potomac plantation will take up the rest of the day. Retire to **Old Town Alexandria** via the scenic George Washington Memorial Parkway. Spend your last day exploring Old Town.

6 THE GREAT CIVIL WAR BATTLES IN 1 WEEK

This route follows the major Union attempts to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond, about 100 miles south of Washington, D.C., between 1862 and 1865. Although the Civil War raged elsewhere in Virginia, especially in the Shenandoah Valley, the last of these Union advances put an end to the nation's bloodiest conflict when Lee surrendered his sword to Grant at Appomattox Court House.

Day ❶: Manassas ★★

Two of the war's great battles, including its first, took place near a stream known as Bull Run, outside the town of **Manassas.** Stonewall Jackson won his nickname here when he stood his ground like a stone wall. You can spend most of a day seeing where it all took place in **Manassas National Battlefield Park** (p. 94). Plan to stay in nearby Middleburg or Leesburg in the Hunt Country.

Days ❷ & ❸: Fredericksburg ★★★

Sitting beside the Rappahannock River, Fredericksburg was directly in the path of the Union advances. You will need these 2 days to explore **Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park** (p. 108), for it includes four of the Civil War's most important battles—Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse—plus the farmhouse where Stonewall Jackson died.

Days ❹ & ❺: Richmond ★★★

Richmond withstood 4 years of war as the Confederacy's capital. Spend one of these days downtown at the **Museum and White House of the Confederacy** (p. 230) and at the **Richmond Civil War Visitor Center at Tredegar Iron Works** (p. 231). The latter serves as starting point for your second day's driving tour of the battlefields east of the city, now part of the **Richmond National Battlefield Park** (p. 231).

Day ❻: Petersburg ★★

The war's last great action took place as Grant laid a 10-month siege to **Petersburg,** then an important railway junction and the key to Richmond's supply line. Union forces finally broke through on April 12, 1865, forcing Lee into his final retreat. Start at downtown Petersburg's **Siege Museum** (p. 241), and then drive along the lines east of town, now part of **Petersburg National Battlefield Park** (p. 242).

Day ❼: Appomattox ★★★

Lee advanced west for a week until he ran out of supplies near Appomattox Court House, about 90 miles west of Petersburg via U.S. 460, where he surrendered on April 9, 1865. The site is beautifully preserved in the **Appomattox Court House National Historical Park** (p. 138).

5

Northern Virginia

One of my northern Virginia neighbors asked me if I would omit this chapter—so you won't come here and add to our already horrific traffic. His request was in jest, but our clogged highways are anything but a joke. Officially, we have the nation's worst congestion after Los Angeles and San Francisco, and we're near the top of the road-rage list, too. It's the result of tremendous growth in the Washington, D.C., metro area over the past decade, much of it on the Virginia side of the Potomac River.

Alexandria, Arlington, and other nearby northern Virginia municipalities are no longer primarily bedroom communities for D.C. workers. Thanks to burgeoning high-tech businesses and the outsourcing of government work, we are today an economic dynamo in our own right. Things have slowed a bit, but we continue to grow even in the teeth of today's Great Recession.

Fairfax County, which wraps around Arlington and Alexandria, has more than one million residents, making it the most populous jurisdiction in Virginia. That's twice the population of the District of Columbia. Tysons Corner, a shopping and office complex at the junction of I-495 and Va. 7, has more office space than downtown Denver, and the strip running west from there through Reston and Herndon to Washington Dulles International Airport is one of the nation's major high-tech corridors. Our metropolitan sprawl has extended its tentacles even into the bucolic Hunt Country beyond Dulles airport, where Loudoun is one of the nation's fastest-growing counties.

All that having been said, please don't let our traffic rants discourage you from coming, for it will be well worth your time. If you avoid our rush hours, you can easily get to pockets of historical charm that will take you back hundreds of years.

In Alexandria, the cobblestone streets of the 18th-century Old Town still ring with the footsteps of George Washington, James Monroe, and Robert E. Lee. Virginia's Colonial plantations begin on the Potomac south of Old Town with George Washington's Mount Vernon, one of our nation's most visited homes.

Out in the western part of Loudoun County and in most of Fauquier County, our crowded highways give way to the winding country roads, rolling hills, and picturesque horse farms and villages that make the Hunt Country a special place.

1 ALEXANDRIA ★★★

5 miles S of Washington, D.C.; 95 miles N of Richmond

Founded by a group of Scottish tobacco merchants, the riverfront town of Alexandria came into being in July 1749, when a 60-acre tract of land was auctioned off in ½-acre lots. As you stroll the brick sidewalks and cobblestone streets of highly gentrified **Old Town,** the city's official historic district, you'll see more than 2,000 buildings dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

George Washington stood in the door of Gadsby's Tavern and reviewed his troops for the last time. Robert E. Lee spent his boyhood here. Both worshiped from the pews of

Tips How to Avoid Gridlock

Traffic in the Washington, D.C., metro area is so bad that a columnist for the *Washington Post* writes under the pseudonym "Dr. Gridlock." Although they start earlier and run later depending on distance from D.C., weekday rush hours generally run from 6:30 to 9:30am and from 3:30 to 6:30pm, but tie-ups can occur any time, especially in ongoing construction zones. Take the area's Metrorail or other public transportation whenever possible and try to avoid the roads altogether during rush hours. I keep my radio tuned to WTOP (103.5 FM), which gives traffic reports every 10 minutes.

Christ Church. Indeed, if they weren't instantly shocked back to death by the cars jockeying for prized parking spaces, Washington and Lee would still recognize their old haunts.

There's more than history here to explore. With its abundance of shops, boutiques, art galleries, restaurants, and tourists (not to mention hordes of older teens hanging out on Fri and Sat nights), Old Town Alexandria serves as our hip version of Georgetown over in D.C. Once you get here, you will find plenty to see, do, and eat in Old Town. Give yourself at least a day to poke around the historic district, another to see Mount Vernon and the other Potomac plantations a short drive to the south.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

The Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association's **Ramsay House Visitor Center,** 221 King St., at Fairfax Street facing Market Square (✆ **800/388-9119** or 703/838-4200; 703/838-5005 for 24-hr. Alexandria events recording; fax 703/838-4683; www.visitalexandriava.com), is open daily from 9am to 5pm except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. In this 1724 house, Alexandria's oldest, you can pick up maps and brochures, find out about special events during your visit, and get information about accommodations, restaurants, sights, shopping, and whatever else. You can also get a free 1-day parking permit here (see "Getting There," below).

Be sure to pick up a free copy of ***Old Town Crier*** (✆ **703/836-9132;** www.oldtowncrier.com), a monthly magazine packed with information and news about special events, dining, shopping, and entertainment.

Getting There

For more information about transportation, see "Getting There & Getting Around," in chapter 3.

BY PLANE **Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD)** is about 30 miles west of Alexandria (✆ **703/661-2700;** www.mwaa.com). **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA)** is 2 miles north of Old Town via the George Washington Memorial Parkway (✆ **703/685-8000;** www.mwaa.com). Washington's **Metrorail** (see below) provides easy transport from Reagan National to Alexandria via its Blue and Yellow lines. Taxis are available at both airports, and **SuperShuttle** (✆ **800/BLUE-VAN** [258-3826]; www.supershuttle.com) operates frequent van service.

BY CAR All the major **car-rental firms** are based at the airports. The scenic George Washington Memorial Parkway passes through Old Town as Washington Street, Alexandria's main north-south thoroughfare. I-95 crosses the Potomac River at Alexandria; take Exit 177 and go north on U.S. 1 into Old Town. Turn east on King Street off either route to reach the heart of Old Town.

The first item of business is to get a **free 1-day parking permit** at the Ramsay House Visitor Center (see "Visitor Information," above), which allows you to park free at any 2-hour meter, except those in Metrorail lots, for up to 24 hours. They do *not* apply to spaces without meters. You'll need your car's license plate number and the state in which it's registered—which could be other than Virginia if it's a rental.

BY TRAIN The **Amtrak** station (✆ **800/872-7245** or 703/836-4339; www.amtrak.com) is at 110 Callahan Dr., at King Street.

BY METRORAIL From Arlington or Washington, take the Blue or Yellow **Metrorail** (✆ **202/637-7000;** www.wmata.com) lines to the King Street station (it's next to Amtrak's Alexandria station). Metrorail operates Monday to Thursday from 5:30am to midnight, Friday 5:30am to 2am, Saturday 8am to 3am, and Sunday 8am to midnight. Fares range from $1.35 to $3.90 depending on time of day and length of ride.

From the King Street Station, it's about a 15-minute walk east on King Street through Old Town's rapidly developing western section. Or you can save your shoe leather for sightseeing by taking the free **King Street Trolley** (✆ **703/838-3800**) between the station and the waterfront daily between 11:30am and 10pm. It departs the waterfront at 10, 30, and 50 minutes after each hour.

At other times, the DASH buses run along King Street to the corner of Fairfax Street and the door of the visitor center (see "Getting Around," below). Base fare is $1.25.

City Layout

Old Town Alexandria is laid out in a simple grid. The original town grew north-south along the Potomac River, but most of what you will want to see and do today is on, or a few blocks off, King Street, the main east-west drag, between the waterfront and the King Street Metrorail station. Until a few years ago, visitors to Old Town seldom wandered west of Washington Street. But the Metro has spurred development near the station, and new stores and restaurants have sprouted up all along King Street, and a large commercial real estate development known as Carlyle resides south of the station between Duke Street and Eisenhower Avenue.

Going west from the Potomac River, Union to Lee Street is the 100 block; Lee to Fairfax, the 200 block; and so on. Numbers on the cross streets (more or less going north and south) are divided north and south by King Street. King to Cameron is the 100 block north, Cameron to Queen the 200 block north, and so on; King to Prince is the 100 block south, and so on.

Getting Around

As a glance at the walking tour map later in this chapter will indicate, Old Town's prime historic sites are contained within several blocks. Park your car for the day, don comfortable shoes, and start walking—it's the easiest way.

Alexandria's bus system, known as **DASH** (✆ **703/370-3274;** www.dashbus.com), is primarily useful for getting from the King Street Metro station to the Ramsay House Visitor Center (take buses numbered AT-2 and AT-5). There's no service New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, or Christmas. The visitor center gives away route maps, as does the DASH

Old Town Transit Shop, 1775-C Duke St. (✆ **703/299-6227**), opposite the Embassy Suites Hotel Alexandria Old Town.

For a taxi, call **Alexandria Yellow Cab Company** (✆ **703/549-2500**) or **Alexandria White Top Cab Company** (✆ **703/683-4004**).

EXPLORING OLD TOWN

Whenever you come, you're sure to run into some activity or other—a jazz festival, a tea garden or tavern gambol, a quilt exhibit, a wine tasting, or an organ recital. But note that **many of Alexandria's main attractions are closed on Monday.**

The Top Attractions

Carlyle House Historic Park Patterned after Scottish-English manor houses, this architecturally impressive home was completed in 1753 by Scottish merchant John Carlyle for his bride, Sarah Fairfax, who hailed from one of the first families of Virginia. It was a social and political center visited by many great men of the time, including George Washington, but its most important moment in history occurred in April 1755, when Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock, commander in chief of His Majesty's forces in North America, met five Colonial governors here and asked them to tax colonists to finance the French and Indian War. Colonial legislatures refused, one of the first instances of serious friction between America and Britain. Nevertheless, Braddock made Carlyle House his headquarters during the war. The house is furnished with period pieces, and the original large parlor and study have survived intact. You can explore the gardens and browse the gift shop. Call or check the website for special events and lectures.

121 N. Fairfax St. (near Cameron St.). ✆ **703/549-2997.** www.carlylehouse.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 children 5–12, free for children 4 and younger. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun noon–4pm. Guided 45-min. tours depart on the hour and half-hour.

Christ Church ★ This sturdy redbrick Georgian-style church, in continuous use since 1773, would be an important national landmark even if its two most distinguished members were not George Washington and Robert E. Lee. Washington and other early members fomented revolution in the churchyard, and Lee was offered command of Virginia's army here during the Civil War. You can sit in their family pews. There have, of course, been many changes since Washington's day, but for the most part, the original structure remains, including the handblown glass in the windows. The bell tower, church bell, galleries, and organ were added by the early 1800s, the "wineglass" pulpit in 1891. The **Old Parish Hall** now houses a gift shop and an exhibit on the history of the church. Do walk in the weathered graveyard, Alexandria's first and only burial ground until 1805.

118 N. Washington St. (at Cameron St.). ✆ **703/549-1450.** www.historicchristchurch.org. Free admission (donations accepted). Mon–Sat 9am–4pm; Sun 2–4pm. Gift shop Tues–Sat 10am–4pm. Services Sun 8, 9, 11:15am, and 5pm. Closed federal holidays.

Gadsby's Tavern Museum ★ Alexandria was at the crossroads of early America, and the center of life in Alexandria was Gadsby's Tavern. Consisting of two buildings—a tavern dating from about 1785 and the City Tavern and Hotel (1792)—it's named for a memorable tavernkeeper, Englishman John Gadsby, whose establishment was renowned for elegance and comfort. The rooms have been restored to their 18th- and 19th-century appearance. The second-floor ballroom, with its musicians' gallery, was the scene of Alexandria's most lavish parties, including Thomas Jefferson's inaugural banquet in 1801. George Washington's birthnight ball and banquet have been an annual tradition here

Value Save with a Discounted Attraction Pass

Alexandria's Ramsay House Visitor Center usually sells money-saving **discounted attraction passes** to some of the top sights. A combination ticket to Gadsby's Tavern, Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, Lee-Fendall House, and Carlyle House Historic Park recently cost $12 for adults, $8 for children 11 to 17. The passes change from year to year, but it will pay to ask the center what's being offered.

since 1797. To cap off your historical experience, you can dine at Gadsby's Tavern, which is still operating (p. 72).

134 N. Royal St. ✆ **703/838-4242.** www.gadsbystavern.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 children 5–12, free for children 4 and younger. Museum Apr–Oct Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun–Mon 1–5pm; Nov–Mar Wed–Sat 11am–4pm, Sun 1–4pm. Guided 30-min. tours begin 15 min. before and after the hour.

Lee-Fendall House Kids Revolutionary War hero Henry "Light-Horse Harry" sold the original lot under this house to Philip Richard Fendall (a Lee on his mother's side), who built the house in 1785. It was home to 37 Lees of Virginia until 1903. John L. Lewis, the American labor leader, was its last private owner; his estate sold it to the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation. The trust is slowly renovating the structure with the goal of restoring it to its 1850 appearance, right down to the paint colors. It's a treasure of Lee family furniture, heirlooms, and documents. You shouldn't have to wait long for a 30-minute guided tour, which will interpret the home as it was between 1850 and 1870 and offer insight into Victorian family life. You'll also see the award-winning garden with its magnolia and chestnut trees, roses, and boxwood-lined paths.

614 Oronoco St. (at Washington St.). ✆ **703/548-1789.** www.leefendallhouse.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 children 5–12, free for children 4 and younger. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun 1–4pm. Closed mid-Dec to Jan. Mandatory 30-min. tours depart on hour.

Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum Founded in 1792 by Edward Stabler, a Quaker minister and an abolitionist, the Apothecary Shop occupied these two town houses until 1933. Martha Washington ordered castor oil shortly before her death in 1802, and Robert E. Lee was shopping here in 1859 when he received orders to quash John Brown's rebellion at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. It was more than a drugstore, however, for in addition to tinctures, elixirs, and potions such as Dragon's Blood, it also sold other products such as paint (Lee bought a few gallons for Arlington House, his mansion at what is now Arlington National Cemetery; see "A Side Trip to Arlington," later in this chapter). Although the building was renovated recently, the shop still looks like it did when the Stabler-Leadbeater family closed its doors for the last time, leaving behind a collection of more than 8,000 original objects. You'll see it all on a 30-minute guided tour.

105–107 S. Fairfax St. (btw. King and Prince sts.). ✆ **703/836-3713.** www.apothecarymuseum.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 children 5–12, free for children 4 and younger. Apr–Oct Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun–Mon 1–5pm; Nov–Mar Wed–Sat 11am–4pm, Sun 1–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

More Attractions

Alexandria Black History Museum African Americans have been part of Alexandria's history from Colonial times to the present (incumbent Mayor William D. Euile is

black). The Ramsay House Visitor Center distributes a fine brochure, "A Remarkable and Courageous Journey," which describes 23 important black-history sites, with a map showing their locations. Start at this museum, in a building constructed in 1940 as the black community's first public library after a civil rights sit-in failed to integrate the Alexandria city library. It exhibits historical objects, photographs, documents, and memorabilia relating to local African Americans from the 18th century on. In addition to the permanent collection, the museum presents rotating exhibits. Optional guided tours take about 30 minutes.

902 Wythe St. ✆ **703/838-4356.** www.alexblackhistory.org. Admission $2. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Martin Luther King Day, Easter, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

The Athenaeum A handsome Greek Revival building with a classic portico and Doric columns, the Athenaeum is home to the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association. Art exhibits here run the gamut from Matisse lithographs to shows of East Coast artists. The building, which dates from 1851, originally contained the Bank of the Old Dominion, whose operations were interrupted when Yankee troops used the building as their headquarters during the Civil War. Today, it hosts performances by the Alexandria Ballet and, during summer, the Alexandria Classical Guitar Festival. Guided tours are available on request.

201 Prince St. (at Lee St.). ✆ **703/548-0035.** www.nvfaa.org. Free admission (donations appreciated). Sun and Thurs–Fri noon–4pm; Sat 1–4pm. Gallery shows Apr–Nov.

Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site Civil War buffs will enjoy taking a short drive from Old Town to this museum in a 45-acre city park on the site of one of the chain of Union forts erected to protect Washington, D.C. The Yankees occupied Alexandria the day after South Carolina seceded from the Union and held it for 4 years. It's the best preserved of the surviving forts and the only one with a museum. About 90% of the earthwork walls are preserved, and the Northwest Bastion has been restored, with six mounted guns (facing south waiting for the Confederates who never came). You can explore the fort as well as replicas of the ceremonial entrance gate and an officers' hut. The museum explains life during the occupation and shows a 12-minute orientation video. Tours are given only for groups of 12 or more. Allow about an hour.

4301 W. Braddock Rd. ✆ **703/838-4848.** www.fortward.org. Free admission. Fort daily 9am–sunset. Museum Apr–Oct Tues–Sat 9am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. Nov–Mar Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. From Old Town, follow King St. west, go right on Kenwood St., then left on W. Braddock Rd.; continue for ¾ mile to the entrance on the right.

Friendship Firehouse Alexandria's first firefighting organization, the Friendship Fire Company, was established in 1774. As the city grew, the company attracted increasing recognition, not only for its firefighting efforts but also for its ceremonial and social presence at parades and other public occasions. Today's brick building was erected to replace an earlier one destroyed by fire in 1855. The museum not only exhibits firefighting paraphernalia dating back to the 18th century, but it also documents the Friendship Company's efforts to claim George Washington as one of its own founding fathers. Tours are given by the staff on request; they take about 20 minutes.

107 S. Alfred St. (btw. King and Prince sts.). ✆ **703/838-3891** or 838-4994. http://oha.alexandriava.gov/friendship. Free admission. Fri–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun 1–4pm. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

George Washington Masonic National Memorial Visible for miles from atop Shooter's Hill, this imposing neoclassical shrine is modeled after the ancient lighthouse

at Alexandria, Egypt, and dedicated to American Freemasonry's most illustrious member. The heart of the memorial is the ornate hall dominated by a colossal 17-foot-tall bronze depicting Washington as lodge master. On either side are 46-foot-long murals, one depicting him laying the U.S. Capitol cornerstone in a Masonic ceremony, another showing him and his Masonic brothers attending Christ Church in Philadelphia during the Revolution. Stained-glass windows in the hall honor 16 other patriots and Freemasons associated with Washington. (No, the U.S. was not created as part of some mysterious Masonic conspiracy!) Be sure to see the fourth-floor museum, which displays many items, including a Washington family Bible. The ninth-floor observation deck offers a 360-degree view that takes in the Potomac River, all of Washington, D.C., the Maryland shore, and northern Virginia.

101 Callahan Dr. (at King St.). ✆ **703/683-2007.** www.gwmemorial.org. Free admission. Apr–Sept daily 9am–4pm. Oct–Mar daily 10am–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. Guided tours 10 and 11:30am, 1:30 and 3pm.

The Lyceum: Alexandria's History Museum The Lyceum tells Alexandria's story from Colonial times through the 20th century. The brick-and-stucco Lyceum itself merits a visit. Built in 1839, it was designed in the Doric temple style (with imposing white columns) to serve as a lecture, meeting, and concert hall. The first floor originally contained the Alexandria Library and natural science and historical exhibits. It was an important center of Alexandria's cultural life until the Civil War, when Union forces took it over for use as a hospital. Today it features changing exhibits and an ongoing series of lectures, concerts, and educational programs. An adjoining nonprofit shop carries books, maps, toys, and gifts.

201 S. Washington St. ✆ **703/838-4994.** www.alexandriahistory.org. Admission $2. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm.

Old Presbyterian Meeting House Presbyterian congregations have worshiped in Virginia since Jamestown days, when the Rev. Alexander Whittaker converted the American Indian princess Pocahontas. Scottish pioneers established this congregation in 1774. Its bell tolled continuously for 4 days after George Washington's death in December 1799, and Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Methodist ministers preached memorial services from its pulpit. Among the notable Alexandrians buried in the church graveyard are John and Sara Carlyle; Dr. James Craik, who treated Washington and dressed Lafayette's wounds at Brandywine; and William Hunter, Jr., founder of the St. Andrew's Society of Scottish descendants (bagpipers pay homage to him the first Sat of each Dec). It's also the site of the tomb of an Unknown Soldier of the Revolutionary War. The original parsonage, built in the Flounder style in 1787, is still intact. There's no guided tour, but there are recorded narratives in the church and graveyard.

321 S. Fairfax St. (at Duke St.). ✆ **703/549-6670.** www.opmh.org. Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–4:30pm. Services Sun 8:30 and 11am.

Three Specialized Attractions

In the former headquarters of Franklin, Armfield & Co., one of America's largest 19th-century slave traders, **Freedom House Museum,** 1315 Duke St. (✆ **703/836-2858;** www.freedomhousemuseum.org), between Payne and West streets, uses first-person accounts to tell the story of the more than 1,800 enslaved persons who were bought and sold here each year. A slave compound occupied most of this city block. The museum is operated by the Northern Virginia Urban League, which shares the building. Open Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm. Admission is free but donations are encouraged.

Much digging has taken place to study and preserve the past in Old Town, and some of the results are on display in the **Alexandria Archaeology Museum,** 105 N. Union St. (✆ **703/838-4399;** www.alexandriaarchaeology.org), on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art center. It shares space with a working laboratory. Admission is free, and it's open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 3pm, Saturday 10am to 5pm, and Sunday 1 to 5pm.

If you've ever had a clever idea for an invention you thought would revolutionize the world (and make you rich), walk into the **U.S. Patent & Trademark Office Museum,** in the USPTO's Madison Building, 600 Dulany St. (✆ **703/968-4332;** www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ahrpa/opa/museum), which uses high-tech displays to explain how ideas for famous products came into being. Admission is free. The museum is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Saturday noon to 5pm. From the King Street Metro station, follow Diagonal Road south to Dulany Street.

Guided Tours

Though it's easy to see Alexandria on your own (see "Walking Tour: Old Town Alexandria," below), your experience will be enhanced by having a knowledgeable local guide. Take your pick among **Alexandria's Footsteps to the Past** (✆ **703/683-3451** or 703/850-7138; www.footstepstothepast.com), **Alexandria Tours of Old Town** (✆ **703/329-1122**), or **The Old Town Experience** (✆ **703/836-0694;** www.alexandriacitywebsite.com/OldTownExperience.htm). Even if you see everything on your own during the day, you'll enjoy spooking around Old Town after dark with **Alexandria's Original Ghost & Graveyard Tours** (✆ **703/519-1749** or 703/548-0100; www.alexcolonialtours.com). They usually explore Old Town's streets and back alleys Wednesday to Sunday nights (call for the schedule and to make reservations). The Ramsay House Visitor Center (see "Visitor Information," earlier in this section) has their schedules and will make reservations, which are required. All three tours cost $10 for adults, $5 for kids 7 to 12, free for children 6 and younger.

WALKING TOUR OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA

START:	**Ramsay House Visitor Center, King Street at Fairfax Street.**
FINISH:	**Torpedo Factory, Waterfront at Cameron Street.**
TIME:	**Allow approximately 2½ hours, not including museum and shopping stops.**
BEST TIMES:	**Anytime Tuesday through Sunday.**
WORST TIMES:	**Monday, when many historic sites are closed.**

You'll get a glimpse into the 18th century as you stroll along Alexandria's brick-paved sidewalks, lined with Colonial residences, historic houses and churches, museums, shops, and restaurants. This walk ends at the waterfront, no longer a center of commercial shipping but now home to an arts center along the Potomac riverfront.

Begin your walk at the:

❶ Ramsay House Visitor Center

Built around 1724, the center has a Dutch barn roof and an English garden. It's located at 221 King St., at Fairfax Street, in the heart of the historic district. This is the best place to get your bearings.

Head north on Fairfax Street to:

❷ Carlyle House Historic Park

This elegant 1753 manor house is set off from the street by a low wall.

Continue north on Fairfax to the corner. Turn left on Cameron, past the back of the old city hall, to the redbrick buildings across Royal Street, known as:

❸ Gadsby's Tavern

The 18th-century tavern complex houses a museum of 18th-century antiques, while the hotel portion is an Early American–style restaurant.

> **TAKE A BREAK**
> The 18th-century atmosphere at **Gadsby's Tavern** (p. 72) is the perfect place for a sandwich or salad.

Continue west on Cameron Street and turn right on St. Asaph Street. At Queen Street, you can see:

❹ No. 523 Queen St.

At 7 feet wide, it's Alexandria's narrowest house.

Continuing north on St. Asaph, you'll come to:

❺ Princess Street

The cobble paving stones are original (and you'll see why heavy traffic is banned here).

One block farther north on St. Asaph, turn left at Oronoco Street. The house on your right at number 607 was:

❻ Robert E. Lee's Boyhood Home

Lee lived in the Federal-style mansion at 607 Oronoco St. from age 5 until he went to West Point in 1825. It's a private residence.

Across Oronoco Street, at the corner of Washington, is the:

❼ Lee-Fendall House

The gracious white-clapboard residence was home to several generations of Lees. Enter through the pretty Colonial garden.

Head south (left) on Washington, a busy commercial thoroughfare, to Queen Street and cross over to:

❽ Lloyd House

A beautiful late Georgian home (1797), the house is now part of the Alexandria Library and holds a fascinating collection of documents, books, and records on the city and state.

Proceed south on Washington Street to the quiet graveyard entrance behind:

❾ Christ Church

The Washingtons and Lees worshiped in this Episcopal church.

Leave by the front entrance, on Columbus Street, and turn left to King Street.

> **TAKE A BREAK**
> A cappuccino-and-pastry break at **Bread & Chocolate,** 611 King St. (p. 75), is guaranteed to revive flagging spirits. Sandwiches and salads are also available at this casual spot.

From King Street, turn left on Alfred Street, to the small but historic:

❿ Friendship Firehouse

You can see an extensive collection of antique fire-fighting equipment here.

Turn left at the corner of Prince Street and proceed to Washington. At the corner is the Greek Revival:

⓫ The Lyceum: Alexandria's History Museum

Built in 1839 as the city's first cultural center, today it's a city historical museum. The museum shop has a lovely selection of crafts, silver, and other gift items.

At the intersection of Washington and Prince stands:

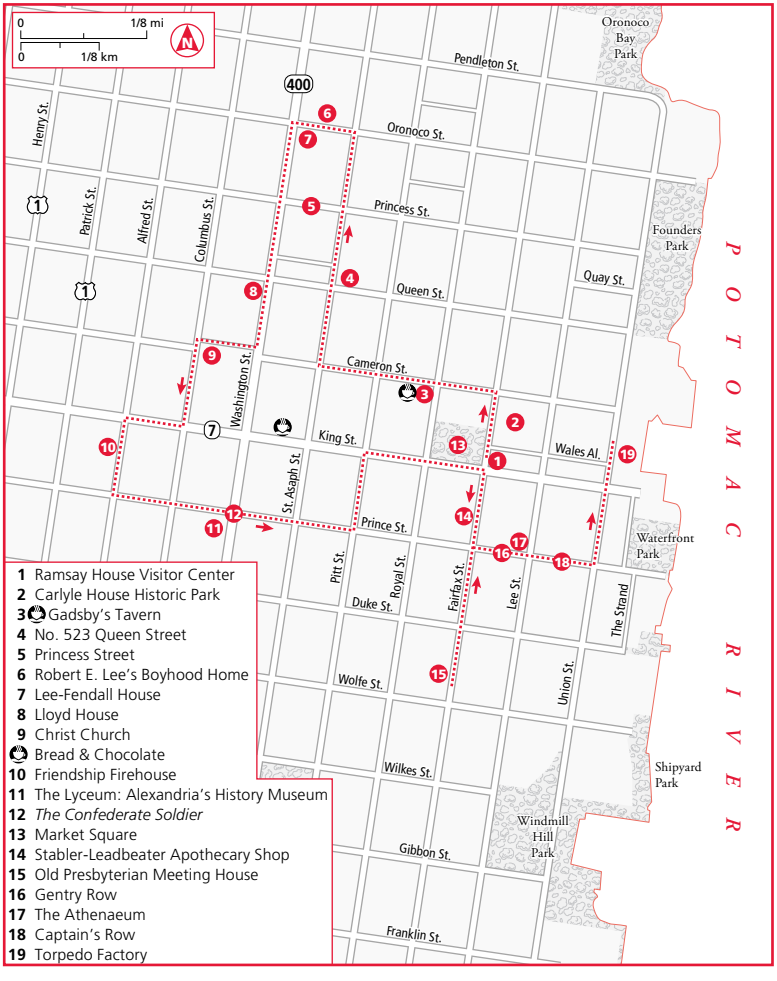
⓬ The Confederate Soldier

The sculptor modeled the dejected bronze figure after one in the painting *Appomattox* by John A. Elder. Confederate-soldier statues in Southern towns traditionally face north (in case the Yankees return), but Alexandria's looks southward, perhaps because Union soldiers occupied the city during the war.

Continue walking east on Prince to Pitt Street, then turn left to King. Turn right and you'll see the fountain in:

⓭ Market Square

This open space along King Street from Royal to Fairfax in front of the modern but Williamsburg-style Town Hall has



been used as a town market and meeting ground since 1749. Today, the market is held on Saturday mornings.

Turn right on Fairfax to the quaint:

14 Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop

A remarkable collection of early medical ware and handblown glass containers is on display here.

Head south on Fairfax to Duke Street, to the:

15 Old Presbyterian Meeting House

George Washington's funeral sermons were preached in 1799 in this 18th-century church. The graveyard has a marker commemorating the Unknown Soldier of the Revolutionary War.

Retrace your steps back to Prince Street and turn right. Between Fairfax Street and Lee Street you'll see:

⑯ Gentry Row

The local leaders who made their homes in these three-story town houses in the 18th and 19th centuries gave their name to the row. With the skyrocketing price of houses here, Old Town should be called "Gentry City."

At the corner of Prince and Lee is the:

⑰ The Athenaeum

It's a handsome Greek Revival structure that now houses contemporary art shows.

Cross Lee Street to:

⑱ Captain's Row

This is a pretty cobblestone section of Prince Street. You're now in sight of the Potomac riverfront and may want to stroll down to the little waterfront park at the foot of Prince Street for a panoramic view of the river.

Continue north on Union Street, where you can begin your shopping expedition at:

⑲ Torpedo Factory

You can wander the arts-and-crafts center's studios and galleries, which are open to the public.

Potomac River Cruises

After you've seen Old Town's attractions on foot, you can get a fish-eye view of the city on a cruise operated by **Potomac Riverboat Company** (✆ **877/502-2628** or 703/548-9000; www.potomacriverboatco.com), based at the city dock behind the Torpedo Factory Art Center at the foot of King Street. A 40-minute "Alexandria Seaport Tour" is fine for taking photos of Old Town from out on the river, and it's especially suitable if you are traveling with children. This tour costs $14 for adults, $8 for children ages 2 to 12. Much more scenic is the 1½-hour "Washington Monuments Tour," as it goes upriver for super views of the nation's capital. This tour costs $26 for adults, $14 for children ages 2 to 12, but it's worth the extra money. All cruises run daily from June to September and weekends during May and October. Check at the dockside booth or call for information and reservations.

The company also has cruises to Mount Vernon; see section 2 of this chapter.

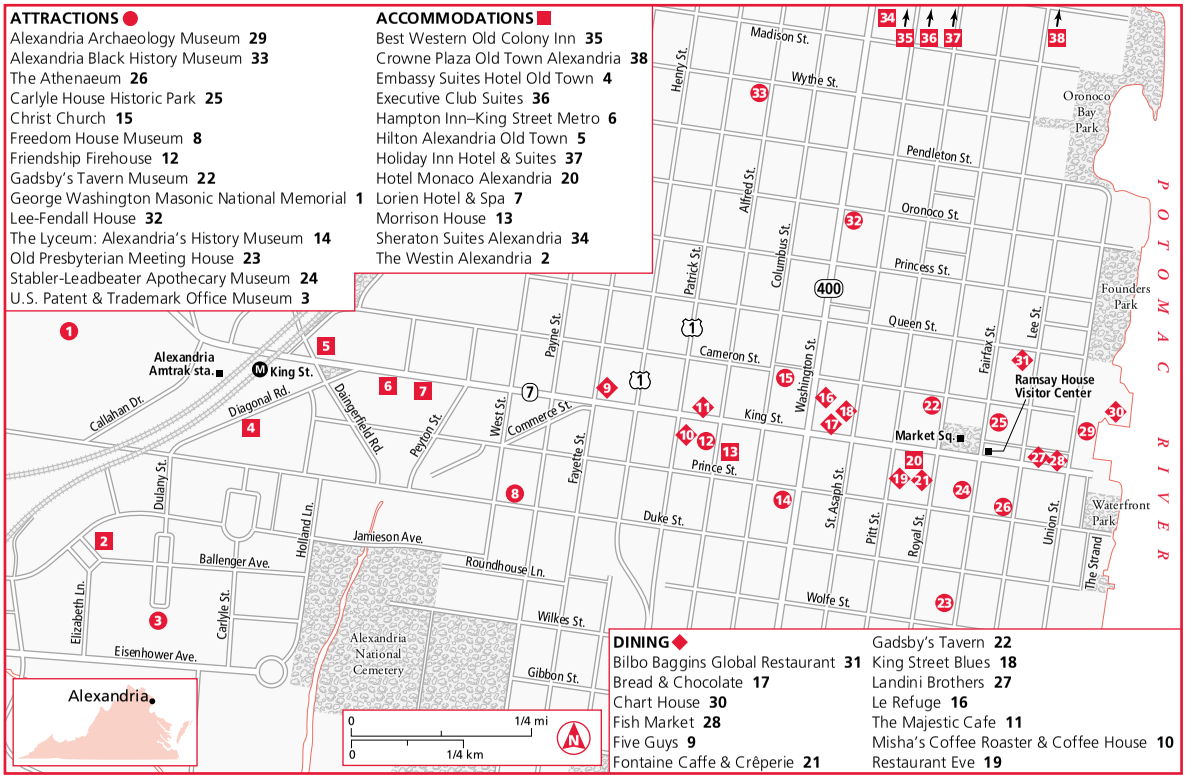
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

This part of northern Virginia has two first-rate hiking, biking, and running trails. A 17-mile paved trail starts at Memorial Bridge and borders the **George Washington Memorial Parkway** south to Mount Vernon, passing through Old Town on the way (see "A Scenic Drive Along the Potomac River," later in this chapter).

Beginning in the Shirlington area, on I-395 in neighboring Arlington, the **Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail** follows Four-Mile Run Drive and Glencarlyn Park northwest to an old railroad bed, which then proceeds 45 miles through Leesburg to Purcellville (see "The Hunt Country," later in this chapter). **Big Wheel Bikes,** 2 Prince St., at The Strand (✆ **703/739-2300;** www.bigwheelbikes.com), rents a wide range of bikes beginning at $5 an hour. It's open Monday to Friday 11am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 6pm, and Sunday 11am to 5pm.

SHOPPING

Old Town has hundreds of boutiques, antiques stores, art galleries, and gift shops selling everything from souvenir T-shirts to 18th-century reproductions. Most of the best stores are interspersed among the multitude of restaurants and offices on King Street from the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Union St.
The Strand
Market Sq.
Ramsay House Visitor Center
Oronoco Bay Park
Founders Park
Waterfront Park
POTOMAC RIVER
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Alexandria

waterfront to the Metrorail station. Plan to spend a fair amount of time browsing between visits to historic sites. A guide to the city's 50-plus antiques and collectibles stores is available at the visitor center (you'll pay a premium for antiques here, so you may want to wait to buy if you're going to Fredericksburg; see chapter 6).

One essential stop is the **Torpedo Factory Art Center,** 105 N. Union St., between King and Cameron streets on the Potomac River (✆ **703/838-4565;** www.torpedofactory.org). This block-long, three-story waterfront structure was built by the U.S. Navy in 1918 and operated as a torpedo shell-case factory until the early 1950s, then used as storage for artifacts from the Smithsonian Institution. Today, it houses 84 working studios where artists and craftspeople create and sell their works. The shops and galleries are open daily 10am to 5pm, to 9pm on Thursday. It's closed New Year's Day, Easter, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Another highlight here is the nonprofit **Winterthur Museum Store** ★★, 207 King St., between Lee and Fairfax streets (✆ **703/684-6092;** www.winterthur.org), the only off-site venture by the renowned museum of decorative arts on the estate of horticulturist Henry Francis du Pont, in Delaware's Brandywine Valley. It's a delightful browse, including the back garden, which features all sorts of garden plants and ornaments. You'll come across fine reproductions from the Winterthur collection, including lamps, prints, ceramics, brassware, jewelry, garden furniture, and statuary. The store is open Monday to Saturday 11am to 6pm, Sunday noon to 5pm (6pm in summer).

WHERE TO STAY

The hotels I recommend below are either in the heart of Old Town or near the King Street Metrorail station. Another good option near the Metro is the luxurious **Lorien Hotel & Spa,** 1600 King St. (✆ **877/956-7436** or 703/894-3434; www.lorienhotelandspa.com), which opened in 2009. It has the only full-service spa in Alexandria. Also here is **Embassy Suites Hotel Old Town,** 1900 Diagonal Rd. (✆ **800/362-2779** or 703/684-5900; www.embassysuites.com), where every unit has a kitchen.

In the less convenient northern end of Old Town are the **Best Western Old Colony Inn,** 1101 N. Washington St. (✆ **800/528-1234** or 730/739-2222; www.bestwestern.com); **Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites,** 625 First St. (✆ **800/465-4329** or 703/548-6300; www.holiday-inn.com); and the **Executive Club Suites** at 610 Bashford Lane (✆ **800/535-2582** or 703/739-2582), where every unit is an apartment. Nearby, **Sheraton Suites Alexandria,** 801 N. St. Asaph St. (✆ **800/325-3535** or 703/836-4700; www.starwoodhotels.com), provides nothing but suites, while the high-rise **Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria,** 901 N. Fairfax St., at Montgomery Street (✆ **800/972-3159** or 703/683-6000; www.crowneplaza.com), stands near the river, giving some of its 258 rooms water views.

Hampton Inn–King Street Metro Less than a block east of the Amtrak and King Street Metro stations, this six-story hotel is a bit more upscale than most of its Hampton Inn sisters. The reasonably spacious rooms are decorated in typical Hampton fashion. The best are those on the upper floors, which have views over the city. Continental breakfast is served in the lobby, which has a 24-hour coffee and juice dispenser. The outdoor pool is open during summer.

1616 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314. ✆ **800/426-7866** or 703/299-9900. Fax 703/299-9937. www.hamptoninn.com. 80 units. $125–$339 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $10. **Amenities:** Health club. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Hilton Alexandria Old Town ★ Across King Street from the Amtrak and Metro stations, this seven-story Hilton has spacious rooms furnished with antique reproductions. Those on the concierge level come equipped with marble bathrooms and feather beds. Off the lobby and with outdoor seating in warm weather, the restaurant offers seafood, prime steaks, and a little music to go with it. In addition, you can walk into its wine room and pick your vintage (couples can reserve a table for private dining).

1767 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314. ✆ **800/445-8667** or 703/837-0440. Fax 703/837-0454. www.hiltonalexandria.com. 241 units. $169–$299 double; $269–$319 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $20. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; indoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hrs.).

Hotel Monaco Alexandria ★★ Ideally located in the heart of Old Town's historic district, this 6-story brick building used to house a Holiday Inn Select. Then Kimpton Hotels spent some $30 million turning it into this luxury boutique hotel. With a Union soldier's blue uniform providing the color scheme, the spacious units evoke Alexandria's 19th century history. Some have balconies overlooking the hotel's central courtyard. This is the most dog-friendly hotel in Virginia, with no restrictions on breed or size of your dog, who gets treated to twice-weekly "Doggie Happy Hours."

480 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314. ✆ **800/368-5047** or 703/549-6080. Fax 703/684-6508. www.monaco-alexandria.com. 241 units. $129–$299 double; suites from $200. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Parking $20. Pets accepted (no fee). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; indoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Morrison House ★★★ Although it was built in 1985, one of Virginia's finest boutique hotels was designed after the grand manor houses of the Federal period and thus fits right into Old Town. The enchantment begins the moment you ascend the curving staircase to its white-columned portico, where a friendly butler greets you at the door of the marble foyer. It's not stuffy by any means; a polite but relaxed informality reigns here. **The Grille at Morrison House** offers fine American fare, and locals and guests alike pack the lounge on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights to hear live music. Each of the spacious, luxuriously appointed guest quarters is individually decorated and furnished with Federal-period reproductions. Some have mahogany four-poster beds, brass chandeliers, and decorative fireplaces. In your room, you'll find two phones, fresh flowers, down comforters, and robes.

116 S. Alfred St., Alexandria, VA 22314. ✆ **800/367-0800** or 703/838-8000. Fax 703/684-6283. www.morrisonhouse.com. 45 units. $199–$399 double; $299–$499 suite. Packages available. AE, MC, V. Valet parking $20. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; access to nearby health club; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

The Westin Alexandria Facing the U.S. District Court House where 9/11 terrorist Zacharias Moussaoui and other notorious criminals have been convicted, this 9-story, boomerang-shaped hotel is one of the centerpieces of the Carlyle development south of the King Street Metro station. Starting with the pendulum swinging below a sculpture-like clock standing tall in the lobby, the decor evokes inventions approved by the nearby U.S. Office of Patents and Trademarks. So does the Edison Ballroom, one of eight meeting spaces totaling 20,000 square feet. Translated: You'll find more groups and conferences than individual guests here. Rooms are high-tech, both in amenities and appearance, with sleek dark furniture contrasting against stark white bedding. Upper-floor units have views of the surrounding suburbs.

400 Courthouse Sq. (at Jamieson Ave.), Alexandria, VA 22314. ✆ **800/WESTIN1** [937-8461] or 703/253-8600. Fax 703/253-8605. www.starwoodhotels.com. 319 units. $125–$500 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $24 Sun–Thurs, $12 Fri–Sat. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; executive or concierge-level rooms; indoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hr.).

Bed & Breakfasts

Several private Old Town homes, many of them historic properties, offer B&B accommodations under the aegis of **Alexandria & Arlington Bed & Breakfast Networks,** P.O. Box 25319, Arlington, VA 22202 (✆ **888/549-3415** or 703/549-3415; www.aabbn.com), which also represents properties in adjoining Arlington and as far away as the Hunt Country. Check the website for a complete list and rates.

WHERE TO DINE

One of the Washington area's most popular dining destinations, Old Town has many more restaurants than it does historical attractions. You'll find cuisines from around the world offered in every price range along King Street The restaurants described below give you a good sampling of the many tastes offered, but don't be afraid to stroll along and pick one of your own. Restaurants generally post their menus out front, and you'll know by the number of customers which restaurants get nods from the town's affluent citizenry.

My favorite joint for coffee and pastries is **Misha's Coffee Roaster & Coffee House,** 102 Patrick St. (✆ **703/548-4089;** http://mishascoffee.com), which hearkens back to the beatnik coffeehouses of the 1950s, with real art on the walls and thrice-read newspapers on the tables. The dogs and bikes leashed to the parking meters outside attest to Misha's popularity with local residents, who gather here for long conversations over freshly roasted coffee. It's open Monday to Saturday from 6am to 8pm, Sunday 6:30am to 8pm.

Expensive

Chart House ★ AMERICAN One of the few Washington-area restaurants actually on the Potomac River, this member of the national Chart House chain gives you a view of the river, with alfresco patio dining in good weather. The ample, straightforward American fare includes seafood and thick, tender steaks and prime rib, supplemented by daily specials. All entrees come with freshly baked breads and unlimited trips to the salad bar, which features caviar. There's a terrific champagne Sunday brunch here, and the bar and its outdoor tables are my favorite places to cool down after walking around Old Town.

1 Cameron St. ✆ **703/684-5080.** www.chart-house.com. Reservations recommended. Sandwiches (lunch only) $10–$14; main courses $20–$44. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–3pm and 4–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–3pm and 4–11pm; Sun 11am–10pm. Bar Mon–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 11am–10pm.

Gadsby's Tavern ★★ AMERICAN An essential part of the Old Town experience is to dine here, behind the portals where Washington reviewed his troops for the last time. Period furnishings, wood-plank floors, fireplace, and gaslight-style lamps re-create a Colonial atmosphere, while costumed waitstaff and balladeers make for a fun time along the lines of Colonial Williamsburg's taverns (the chow is much better here). You'll dine from the same kind of pewter and china our ancestors used, and Sally Lunn bread is baked daily. Lunch might consist of a Scottish smoked salmon and Surrey bacon club sandwich or a Virginia ham and English cheddar cheese quiche. Dinner entrees usually include one of George Washington's favorites, half a duckling stuffed with fruit and served with Madeira gravy. In winter, warm yourself with drinks like hot buttered rum

and Martha's Remedy—coffee, cocoa, and brandy. The courtyard serves as an outdoor dining area during fine weather.

138 N. Royal St. ✆ **703/548-1288.** www.gadsbystavernrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended for dinner. Main courses $22–$30. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–10pm; Sun 11am–3pm and 5:30–10pm.

Landini Brothers ★ ITALIAN The classic, delicate cuisine of Tuscany is consistently fine at this rustic, almost grottolike restaurant with stone walls, a flagstone floor, and rough-hewn beams overhead. It's especially charming at night by candlelight. There's additional seating in a lovely upstairs dining room. Everything is homemade—the pasta, the crusty Italian bread, and the desserts. Things might get underway with prosciutto and melon or Top Neck clams on the half shell, followed by prime aged beef tenderloin medallions sautéed with garlic, mushrooms, and rosemary in a Barolo wine sauce. Dessert choices include tiramisu and custard-filled fruit tarts. There's jazz upstairs on Friday and Saturday nights.

115 King St. ✆ **703/836-8404.** www.landinibrothers.com. Reservations recommended. Pastas $17–$19; main courses $21–$32. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 4–10pm.

Restaurant Eve ★★★ AMERICAN Old Town's finest restaurant, this exquisitely designed bistro is the creation of talented chef Cathal Armstrong and his wife, Meshelle, who named it for their young daughter, Eve. They really have two restaurants in one here. Residing under a huge skylight, their casual Bistro serves an a la carte menu for lunch and dinner. A doorway leads to the Chef's Tasting Room, a more formal venue where Cathal cooks five-course fixed-priced dinners. In either, their menus change up to 60 times a year to make use of fresh, mostly organic produce from local farms and markets. The rich bouillabaisse with cod and clams is a constant in the Bistro, where you might also find sautéed soft-shell crabs with braised fennel-and-tomato confit. To the left as you enter, an air-conditioned room holds an excellent collection of wines. A good way to sample the fare here without filing for bankruptcy is the $14 Lickity Split-Lounge Lunch Menu, offering a choice of two items such as a salad of local asparagus and Virginia ham.

110 S. Pitt St. ✆ **703/684-4100.** www.restauranteve.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $29–$36; 5-course tasting menu $95. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–9:30pm; Sat 5:30–9:30pm.

Moderate

Bilbo Baggins Global Restaurant ★ Value INTERNATIONAL Named for the title character in *The Hobbit,* this charming two-story restaurant offers fresh homemade fare. The downstairs has rustic wide-plank floors, wood-paneled walls, oak tables, and a brick-oven centerpiece. Upstairs is another dining room with stained-glass windows. It adjoins a skylit wine bar with windows overlooking Queen Street treetops. Candlelit at night, it becomes even cozier. The menu changes frequently to reflect seasonal specialties. At dinner, you'll enjoy entrees such as a wasabi salmon filet with a ragout of fresh asparagus and wild mushrooms, and chicken breast spiced up by an andouille sausage and jalapeño-jack-cheese stuffing. An extensive wine list is available (more than 30 boutique wines are offered by the glass and another 150 by the bottle). Homemade desserts like steamed white-chocolate bread pudding topped with whipped cream provide a delightful finish. Lighter and less expensive fare is available in the bar.

208 Queen St. ✆ **703/683-0300.** www.bilbobaggins.net. Reservations accepted only for parties of 6 or more. Main courses $15–$24. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–2:30pm and 4:30–10:30pm; Sat 11am–10:30pm; Sun 10am–2:30pm and 3:30–9:30pm. Closed Dec 25.

Tips Obama Burgers

Everyone from panhandlers to Old Town's gentry can be seen hauling bags of juicy hamburgers, hot dogs, and seasoned french fries from the Old Town branch of **Five Guys Burgers and Fries,** 107 N. Fayette St. (✆ **703/549-7991;** www.fiveguys.com), between King and Cameron streets. This order-at-the-counter joint hearkens back to pre-McDonald's days when hamburgers weren't frozen beforehand and fresh potatoes were cut on premises. Born in nearby Arlington in 1986, the old-fashioned idea was so successful that more than 450 branches have sprung up in 30 states. Patrons at a Five Guys in Washington, D.C., were shocked in early 2009 when President Obama came in and ordered a cheeseburger and fries for himself and a large sack of burgers for the White House staff. Nothing costs more than $6. The Old Town branch is open daily 11am to 10pm.

Fish Market AMERICAN Although the popular Fish Market has grown to include the building next door, its original corner location is a warehouse that's over 200 years old. Heavy beams, terra-cotta tile floors, exposed brick and stucco walls adorned with nautical antiques, copper pots over a fireplace, copper-topped bars, and saloon doors all lend an old-time ambience. If you're lucky, in fine weather you might get a table for two on a one-table-wide balcony above King Street. Although not exceptional, the fare is passable and reasonably priced Chesapeake-style (broiled, fried, or grilled) fresh fish, shrimp, oysters, and crab. A bowl of seafood stew warms me up on a cold winter's day. On weekends, there's live entertainment in the Main Dining Room and the Sunquest Room.

105 King St. ✆ **703/836-5676.** Reservations not accepted. Salads and sandwiches $7–$15; main courses $13–$25. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11:15am–1am; Fri–Sat 11:15am–2am (kitchen closes at 12:15am).

Fontaine Caffe & Crêperie ★★ Finds FRENCH This little bistro-style restaurant specializes in savory *ble noir* (gluten-free buckwheat) crepes from the Brittany region of France. Here the thin pancakes are wrapped around a variety of ingredients, from grilled bratwurst and Italian sausage to lentils, spinach, and tomatoes simmered in coriander coconut curry sauce. Sweet crepes are made using regular wheat flour but are even tastier. Weekend brunches add French toast and breakfast bruschetta (it's like eggs Benedict over Italian toast). Everything is very good value for the quality.

119 S. Royal St. ✆ **703/535-8151.** www.fontainecaffe.com. Reservations not accepted. Crepes $5.50–$18. AE, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–9pm; Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–10pm; Sat 10am–3pm and 5–10pm; Sun 10am–3pm.

Le Refuge ★ Value FRENCH A wicker model of the Eiffel Tower sits in the bow-front window of Jean-François Chaufour's charming little restaurant, a local mainstay since 1983. Reflecting the cooking style, the intimate setting is typically French country—stucco walls adorned with wine labels and provincial ceramics, bentwood chairs, black-leather banquettes, and tables covered with beige-and-brown napery. The special three-course pre- and after-theater dinner is a great buy: It includes soup or salad; fresh catch of the day, leg of lamb, or calves' liver; and crème brûlée or peach melba for dessert. There's a lunch version, too. Regular house specialties include bouillabaisse, classic rack of lamb, rainbow trout amandine, and chicken Dijonnaise. Nightly specials feature produce fresh from the market.

127 N. Washington St. ✆ **703/548-4661.** www.lerefugealexandria.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $19–$32; fixed-price 3-course dinner $28. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–10pm.

The Majestic Cafe ★★ AMERICAN The bright neon sign recalls the 1950s when a small town cafe occupied this King Street storefront, but the building got a thorough makeover. Now it's one of Old Town's best bistros. The "comfort food" here is very familiar and very good: fried green tomatoes, meatloaf, calves' liver, roast chicken with gravy, New York strip steaks, and grilled fish. Sunday evening turns to "Nana's" family-style dinner for $22 per person.

911 King St. ✆ **703/837-9117.** www.majesticcafe.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $17–$24. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Sun 1–9pm.

Inexpensive

Stalls sell inexpensive eats in the **Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion** between the Torpedo Factory, at King and Cameron streets, and the riverfront Chart House restaurant. It's open daily from 11am to 9:30pm.

Bread & Chocolate CONTINENTAL/BAKERY Part of a successful chain, this cheerful European-style restaurant offers fresh breads, croissants, napoleons, chocolate truffle cakes, Grand Marnier cakes, Bavarian fruit tarts, and other goodies. At breakfast, you can get a *caffè* mocha and an almond croissant, or an omelet with potatoes and a slice of melon. The rest of the day, soups, salads, sandwiches, and light main courses are available to help keep you walking.

611 King St. ✆ **703/548-0992.** www.breadandchocolate.net. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $4–$9; sandwiches and salads $8–$12; main courses $7–$9. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Wed 7am–7pm; Thurs–Sat 7am–9pm; Sun 8am–6pm.

King Street Blues ★ Value AMERICAN This often-noisy and occasionally raucous (especially the first-floor bar) roadhouse is one of Alexandria's most charming restaurants—and the best place in town for an inexpensive meal. It's easy to find, for it occupies all three floors of a small brick building with windows painted on its exterior brick wall. Red neon outlines the real windowpanes. Brian McCall, a local artist, has covered almost every inch of the interior walls with papier-mâché figures and murals, all done with sly tongue-in-cheek good humor. A lively crowd packs the place for the house meatloaf (with a memorable accompaniment of garlic mashed potatoes), Southern-fried catfish, chicken-fried steak, and house-smoked baby back ribs in a sweet yet spicy sauce (you can take a bottle home). For something unusual, order the Roadhouse Nachos—they come with cheese, scallions, and either chicken or pork barbecue over potato chips instead of tortilla chips.

112 N. St. Asaph St. ✆ **703/836-8800.** www.kingstreetblues.com. Reservations accepted. Salads and sandwiches $8–$9.50; main courses $10–$20. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 11am–10pm; bar stays open later.

ALEXANDRIA AFTER DARK

Alexandria falls under the aegis of Washington, D.C., when it comes to the performing arts. The free weekly ***City Paper*** (www.washingtoncitypaper.com) and the monthly magazine ***Old Town Crier*** (www.oldtowncrier.com) are the best sources of news about the local bar and music scene; pick up copies at the Ramsay House Visitor Center and in hotel lobbies.

King Street restaurants are the center of Alexandria's ongoing club and bar scene. Especially noteworthy are **Two-Nineteen,** 219 King St. (✆ **703/549-1141**), which features live jazz Tuesday to Saturday nights in the Basin Street Lounge; the **Fish Market,** 105 King St. (✆ **703/836-5676;** p. 74), with either a pianist or a guitarist Thursday to Saturday nights; and **Murphy's Irish Pub,** 713 King St. (✆ **703/548-1717**), the town's best Gaelic bar with live Irish bands to accompany corned beef and cabbage on weekends.

An older crowd likes to gather for live music on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings in the cozy lounge of the **Morrison House,** 116 S. Alfred St. (✆ **703/838-8000;** p. 71), between King and Prince streets. Sometimes you can hear wannabe professional singers belt out some fine jazz and even an aria or two.

Built about 1914 as a vaudeville house, the restored **Old Town Theater,** 815½ King St. (✆ **703/683-8888;** www.oldtowntheater.com), shows second-run movies. It serves hot dogs, burgers, pizzas, and a few main courses. Call or check the website for the schedule.

The **Birchmere,** 3901 Mount Vernon Ave., south of Glebe Road (✆ **703/549-5919;** www.birchmere.com), is the Washington area's prime showcase for nationally known bluegrass, country, and folk stars. Call or check the website for the schedule and reservations, which are absolutely necessary when a top performer is on stage.

A SIDE TRIP TO ARLINGTON

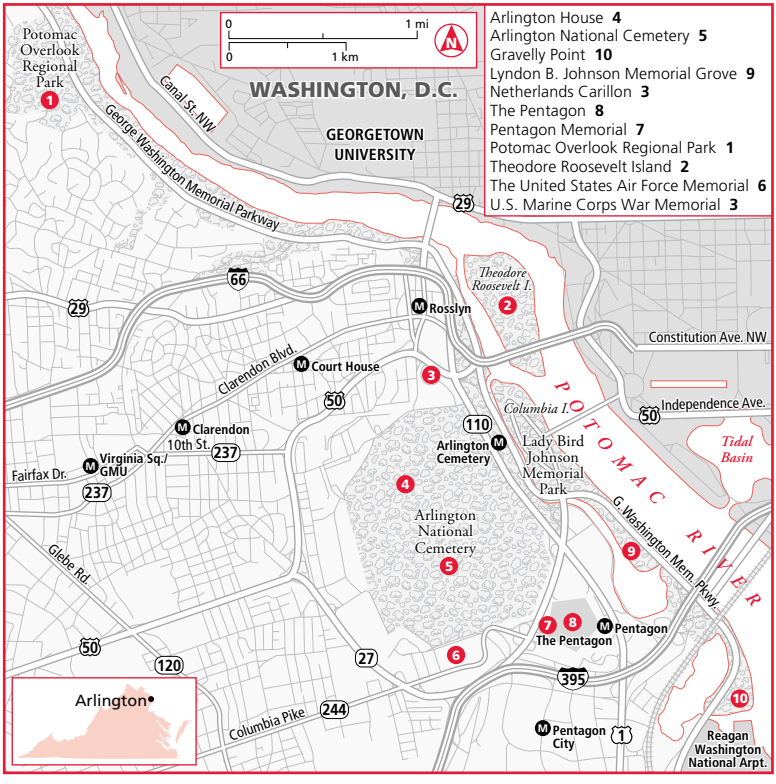
Arlington National Cemetery ★★★

It's an easy excursion from Old Town to the famous **Arlington National Cemetery,** a cherished shrine commemorating the lives given by members of the U.S. armed forces. Its seemingly endless rows of graves mark the mortal remains of the honored dead, both the known and the unknown, who served in conflicts from the Revolutionary War to the present.

Start at the **visitor center** (✆ **703/607-8052;** www.arlingtoncemetery.org), where you can get a free map—and if you have family buried here, find out where. Be sure to pick up a cemetery map, for it's easy to get lost in the maze of pathways. Admission to the cemetery is free. It's open daily 8am to 7pm from April through September, daily 8am to 5pm October through March, with the exceptions of Christmas and New Year's Day. You can drive here from Old Town via U.S. 1 and Va. 110, but it's easier to ride **Metrorail's Blue Line** from the King Street Station. Parking in the cemetery lot costs $1.25 for the first 3 hours, $2 per hour thereafter.

Tips Seeing the Cemetery by Tourmobile

This quiet expanse of green is a walker's paradise, but you can ride around via the **Tourmobile** (✆ **888/868-7707** or 202/554-5100; www.tourmobile.com). Service is continuous daily from 8:30am to 4:30pm April through September, 9:30am to 4:30pm October through March. Tickets cost $7.50 for adults, $6.50 seniors, $3.75 for children 3 to 11. At the visitor center you can also purchase Tourmobile combination tickets that include major Washington, D.C., sights, allowing you to stop and reboard when you're ready. Tourmobiles also depart here for Mount Vernon (see below).



Next door is the **Women in Military Service for America Memorial** (✆ **800/222-2294** or 703/533-1155; www.womensmemorial.org), honoring all women who have served in the military. Inside, there's a computerized registry of more than 250,000 women veterans.

You can spend hours looking at gravestones here, but the one you must see is the poignant **John F. Kennedy Gravesite,** marked by its eternal flame. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is buried next to her first husband. His brothers, Robert F. Kennedy and Edward M. Kennedy, are buried nearby. Looking north, you'll have a splendid view of the capital city across the river (during his presidency, Kennedy once remarked of this spot, "I could stay here forever").

For an even more spectacular view, walk up the ridge above the Kennedy graves to **Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial** (✆ **703/557-0613;** www.nps.gov/arho), a plantation manse built by George Washington Parke Custis, Martha Washington's grandson by her first marriage, after his daughter married a young Virginian named Robert E. Lee. The couple lived here for 30 years before General Lee left in 1861 to join the Confederate cause. He never returned. To spite him, the federal government turned his front yard into a cemetery for slain Union soldiers. The house has been undergoing

a massive renovation and may not be furnished until sometime in 2010. Call ahead to make sure it will be open on the day you plan to visit. Admission is free. The mansion is open daily from 9:30am to 4:30pm (closed Christmas and New Year's Day).

Beyond the mansion, America's most distinguished honor guard slowly marches before the white-marble **Tomb of the Unknowns,** which holds the remains of unidentified combatants slain during World War I. Unknowns from World War II and the Korean War are in the crypts on the plaza in front of it. A crypt for an unknown Vietnam veteran remains vacant since modern forensic science has identified all victims of that conflict. The changing of the guard ceremony—an impressive ritual of rifle maneuvers, heel clicking, and military salutes—takes place daily every half-hour April through September, every hour on the hour the rest of the year.

Adjoining the tomb is the Greek Revival outdoor **Memorial Amphitheater,** used for holiday services, particularly on Memorial Day when the sitting president or vice president attends.

At the Cemetery's Edges

On the northern periphery of the cemetery, just off Va. 110 about 1½ miles north of the Kennedy graves, stands the famous **U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial** (www.nps.gov/archive/gwmp/usmc.htm), better known as the Iwo Jima Memorial. The famous statue is based on news photographer Joe Rosenthal's Pulitzer Prize–winning photo of Marines raising Old Glory on Iwo Jima in February 1945. The Memorial grounds are used for military parades in summer, when there is a free shuttle from the visitor center. Call ✆ **703/289-2500** for the schedule.

Adjacent to the Iwo Jima statue, the **Netherlands Carillon** (www.nps.gov/gwmp/nethcarillon.htm) was a gift from the people of Holland. Thousands of tulip bulbs are planted on the grounds surrounding the 127-foot-high open steel tower, creating a colorful display in spring. Carillon concerts are presented on Easter Sunday and every Saturday thereafter in April, May, and September, from 2 to 4pm. Concerts are held daily from 6 to 8pm June through August. You can climb the tower after the carillonneur performs and enjoy spectacular views of Washington.

Those three shiny spires soaring dramatically into the air south of the cemetery come from the **United States Air Force Memorial** (www.airforcememorial.org), on Air Force Memorial Drive at Columbia Pike (Va. 244). Evoking the "bomb burst" maneuver of the Air Force's Thunderbirds precision flying team, the 270-foot-tall stainless steel spires honor the 54,000 American airmen who have died in combat. The memorial sits on a promontory with a panoramic view over the Pentagon and D.C. beyond (I watch the July 4th fireworks over the National Mall from here). Admission is free. The memorial is open daily from 8am to 11pm. Park free across Columbia Pike.

The terrorist pilot who flew American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, followed Columbia Pike to his destination. Today the former parking lot at the southwest corner of the huge building is the **Pentagon Memorial** (www.whs.mil/memorial), in honor of those who lost their lives that day (not including the terrorists). Trees provide shade over 184 cantilevered benches, one for each victim. Those for Pentagon personnel are on one side, the crew and passengers of Flight 77 on the other. The memorial is open 24 hours daily, with staff on hand from 8am to 8pm. There is no public parking at the Pentagon, so your best bet is to walk 10 minutes from the Air Force memorial, take Metrorail to the Pentagon station, or park near the Pentagon City Metro station and walk under I-395 to the Pentagon.

A SCENIC DRIVE ALONG THE POTOMAC RIVER

Skirting the south bank of the Potomac River for 30 miles between Mount Vernon in the south to the Capital Beltway (I-495) in the northwest, the **George Washington Memorial Parkway** ★★★ is one of Virginia's most scenic drives. It's also a major commuter route, which means lots of traffic during rush hours. Other times, you can drive the entire route in about 45 minutes without stopping. The parkway runs through Old Town Alexandria via King Street; otherwise, it's a four-lane road with neither traffic signals nor stop signs. Also, with the exception of the peaceful **Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Grove** near **The Pentagon,** you cannot make a left turn; accordingly, I drive it from south to north so I can pull off at designated areas beside or overlooking the river. My favorites are **Gravelly Point Park,** on the north side of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (jets roar just a few feet overhead as they take off and land), and at **Potomac Overlook Regional Park,** with a great view over Georgetown in D.C.

As noted in "Outdoor Activities," earlier in this section, you can also run, hike, or bike along part of the parkway. I enjoy hiking to a statute of the Rough Rider in the middle of **Theodore Roosevelt Island,** an 88-acre wooded preserve and bird sanctuary connected to the parkway by a footbridge just south of Rosslyn.

For more information, contact **Headquarters,** George Washington Memorial Parkway, c/o Turkey Run Park, McLean, VA 22101 (✆ **703/289-2500;** fax 703/289-2598; www.nps.gov/gwmp).

2 MOUNT VERNON & THE POTOMAC PLANTATIONS ★★★

Mount Vernon: 9 miles S of Old Town Alexandria

Anyone with the slightest interest in early American thought, politics, sociology, art, architecture, fashion, agriculture, or the decorative arts won't want to miss the scenic drive south along the Potomac from Alexandria to Mount Vernon, the home of George and Martha Washington. Their famous estate, one of the most visited homes in America, is on the way to two other Potomac plantations with Colonial roots. The first president gave Woodlawn, on a hilltop 3½ miles west of Mount Vernon, as a 2,000-acre gift to their adopted daughter, who was Martha's actual granddaughter via her first marriage. And at the less imposing but more fascinating Gunston Hall lived their creative neighbor and friend, George Mason, the most influential revolutionary you never heard about. A liberal thinker, his words inspired Thomas Jefferson when he penned the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Together these three great homes make a fine day trip from Alexandria or Washington, D.C.

GETTING THERE

You will need a car to get to Woodlawn, Gunston Hall, and the other attractions south of Mount Vernon, but you can get to the first president's home by public transportation.

BY CAR It's a pleasant, picturesque drive to Mount Vernon, 8 miles south of Alexandria, via the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which in many places skirts the river's edge. After passing the traffic circle in front of Mount Vernon, the same highway becomes the Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway (Va. 235), which ends at U.S. 1.

BY SUBWAY, BUS & TAXI It's possible to get to Mount Vernon via Metrorail and connecting bus. Take Metro's Yellow Line subway (✆ **202/637-7000;** www.wmata.com), which stops at the King Street Station in Alexandria, to Huntington Station south of Old Town Alexandria. Exit to Huntington Avenue and catch the **Fairfax Connector** bus no. 101 (✆ **703/339-7200;** www.fairfaxconnector.com). The bus ride from Huntington to Mount Vernon takes about 25 minutes and costs $1.35 each way, exact changed required. Call or check the website for the bus schedules. You can also take a **White Top Cab** (✆ **703/644-4500**); fares are about $20 each way.

BY GUIDED TOUR The **Tourmobile** (✆ **202/554-5100;** www.tourmobile.com) runs from Arlington National Cemetery or from the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., to Mount Vernon from April through Labor Day daily at 10am, noon, and 2pm. Tourmobile booths at the cemetery or Washington Monument sell tickets. The fare is $32 for adults, $16 for children 3 to 11, free for children 2 and younger, and it includes admission to Mount Vernon. The trip takes about 4 hours; reservations are required in person at least 30 minutes before departure.

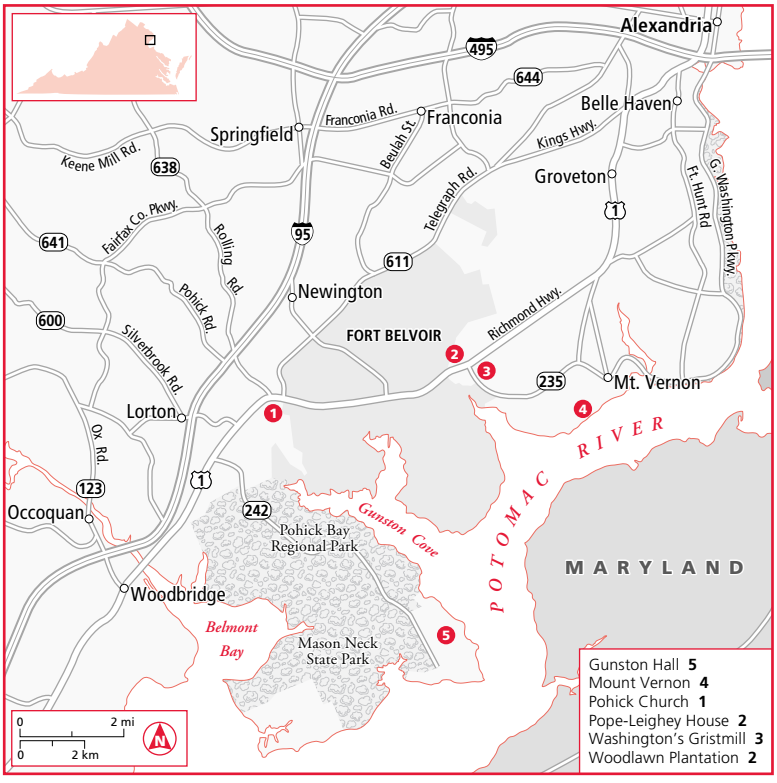
The venerable **Gray Line** (✆ **800/862-1400** or 202/289-1995; www.grayline.com) has all-day guided bus trips from Washington, D.C., to Mount Vernon via Old Town Alexandria. The tours depart at 8am daily except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas and cost $50 for adults, $26 for children 3 to 11.

BY BOAT From April to October, the **Potomac Riverboat Company,** at Union and Cameron streets behind the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Old Town Alexandria (✆ **877/511-1628** or 703/548-9000; www.potomacriverboatco.com), offers cruises down the river to Mount Vernon and back. They depart Tuesday to Sunday at 11am from Memorial Day to Labor Day, on weekends during May, September, and October for the 1-hour cruise to Mount Vernon. Weekday round-trip fares are $38 for adults, $20 for children 2 to 11, including admission to Mount Vernon. The return voyage leaves Mount Vernon at 4pm, which means you will have about 4 hours to explore the mansion and grounds (not long enough if long lines are waiting at the mansion).

In the meantime, the boat goes on 40-minute photo cruises from the Mount Vernon wharf. Fares are $9 adults, $5 for children 2 through 11. Kids under 2 ride free on all cruises.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Gunston Hall ★★ Although not well known outside Virginia, George Mason (1725–92) was one of the most liberal and creative political thinkers of his time. He wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights, upon which Thomas Jefferson drew for the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Mason also helped draft the Constitution but refused to sign it because it didn't abolish slavery or initially contain a Bill of Rights. Built between 1755 and 1759, his one-and-a-half story brick house is a fine example of Colonial Georgian architecture. The restored formal gardens focus on the 12-foot-high English boxwood–lined walkway believed to have been planted by Mason. (That's right: The shrubs could be more than 250 years old!) George and Ann Mason are buried here in the family graveyard. An 11-minute film will introduce you to Mason and his estate. You must then take a 30-minute tour in order to enter the mansion. En route to the house, you'll pass a small museum of Mason family memorabilia. A nature trail goes down to the Potomac (you cannot see the river from the mansion).



10709 Gunston Rd. (Va. 242). ✆ **703/550-9220.** www.gunstonhall.org. Admission $9 adults, $8 seniors, $8 students 6–18, free for children 5 and under. Daily 9:30am–5pm (30-min. tours every half-hour 9:30am–4:30pm). Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From Woodlawn, drive 5½ miles south on U.S. 1, turn left on Gunston Rd. (Va. 242), then 3¾ miles to plantation entry on left.

Mount Vernon ★★★ You can't leave northern Virginia without visiting George and Martha Washington's magnificent home overlooking the Potomac River. Indeed, Mount Vernon has been one of America's most-visited shrines since 1858, when the Mount Vernon Ladies Association purchased the estate from Washington's great-grandnephew, John Augustine Washington, Jr. The association continues to own and maintain the mansion and its grounds, and it has an ongoing effort to locate and return the estate's scattered contents and memorabilia, thus enhancing its authentic appearance (ca. 1799). About 30% of its contents belonged to the Washingtons, including a key to the Paris Bastille, which Lafayette presented to Washington in 1790 via messenger Thomas Paine; the English harpsichord of Martha Washington's granddaughter, Nelly Custis; Martha's china tea service; and Washington's original globe, desk, and dressing table.

Tips Don't Come Early in Spring, Summer, or Any Weekend

You will need at least a half-day to see Mount Vernon and the nearby gristmill and distillery. Many people show up at 8am in spring, summer, or any weekend with the idea of beating the crowds, which they inadvertently create. The guides inside the mansion do not have time to give in-depth information or answer questions when it's crowded. I would tour the mansion later in the day during these busy periods. Rather than stand in line, I highly recommend buying your tickets and reserving your guided audio tours online in advance at www.mountvernon.org. This is especially important during summer and on holiday weekends, when the audio tours sell out quickly. Be sure to click on "Packages," some of which include the price of the audio tour.

You will see more before reaching the mansion, thanks to the **Ford Orientation Center** and **Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center,** at the estate's main gate. Life-size bronze statues of George, Martha, and her two grandchildren, Nelly and Washy Custis, welcome you to the orientation center, which features an 18-minute Hollywood-produced movie in which actors re-create important events in Washington's life. Likewise, the museum features lifelike wax models of Washington at three different ages; they were created with the help of forensic experts. The museum displays a set of false teeth Washington used (only one of his natural teeth remained intact when he assumed the presidency).

If you haven't reserved one online, rent a receiver for the guided audio tour, which is broadcast throughout the estate.

Constructed of beveled pine painted to look like stone, the house is an outstanding example of Georgian architecture. You'll enter by way of the Large Dining Room, which contains many of the original chairs, Hepplewhite mahogany sideboards, and paintings. Step outside on the long front porch and enjoy the view that prompted Washington to declare, "No estate in United America is more pleasantly situated than this." Upstairs are five bedchambers, including the Lafayette Room, where the Marquis spent a few nights, and George and Martha's bedroom, in which Washington died.

After leaving the house, tour the kitchen, smokehouse, overseer's and slave quarters, the Washingtons' graves, and the slave burial ground marked by two monuments to the African Americans who lived, worked, and died at the plantation. Down by the river, a 4-acre exhibition area explains Washington's innovative accomplishments in soil conservation and crop rotation, and his switch from tobacco to wheat, which could be planted twice a year, had a more reliable market, and did not deplete the soil as quickly as the Golden Leaf.

He ground the wheat into flour at **George Washington's Gristmill,** a 1933 reconstruction 3 miles west of the plantation on Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway (Va. 235). He put the mill's byproduct to use making whiskey in a distillery. Costumed interpreters give 20-minute tours explaining how the mill operated, and they actually grind cornmeal for sale in the gift shop. They also make whiskey at the adjacent **George Washington's Distillery,** an exact reproduction of a still built in 1797–98 and burned in 1814. Note that the mill and still are near the intersection of Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway and U.S. 1, not in Gristmill Park, a county facility you'll pass on the way to Washington's mill.

There's an ongoing schedule of special activities at Mount Vernon, especially in summer, running the gamut from special garden tours to treasure hunts for children. Call or check the website to find out what's going on during your visit. Admission is free on Washington's Birthday (the federal holiday, not the actual date), when a wreath-laying ceremony is held at his tomb.

8 miles south of Old Town Alexandria and I-95. ✆ **800/429-1520** or 703/780-2000. www.mountvernon.org. Estate admission $15 adults, $14 seniors, $7 children 6–11. Gristmill admission $4 adults, $2 children 6–11. Combination admission $17 adults, $8.50 children 6–11. Audio mansion tour rentals $6. Mount Vernon: Apr–Aug daily 8am–5pm; Mar and Sept–Oct daily 9am–5pm; Nov–Feb daily 9am–4pm. Gristmill and distillery: Apr–Oct daily 10am–5pm.

WHERE TO DINE AT MOUNT VERNON At the traffic circle outside the main gate, the charming **Mount Vernon Inn** (✆ **703/780-0011**) serves some of the Colonial-style fare George and Martha provided their guests. It's moderately priced, and the atmosphere is great—period furnishings, working fireplaces, waitstaff in 18th-century costumes. Lunch is first-come, first-served, but reservations are highly recommended at dinner (if for no other reason than to find out if the inn is closed for a wedding reception or other event). Lunch is served daily except Christmas from 11am to 3:30pm. Dinner hours are Monday through Thursday from 5 to 8:30pm, Friday and Saturday from 5 to 9pm. Next door, the inexpensive, mall-style **Mount Vernon Food Court** is open from 9:30am to 5:30pm. Both are closed on Christmas. They accept American Express, Discover, MasterCard, and Visa.

Pohick Church This "mother church of northern Virginia" was built between 1769 and 1774 under the supervision of vestrymen George Washington and George Mason. Theirs and other prominent families paid for their own box pews, laid out opposite the pulpit, which was on the side, as was prevalent in England at the time. The first president's connection led to the brick building's being known as "Washington's Church." During the Civil War, Union soldiers stabled their horses in the church and stripped the interior. They did not, however, steal the English baptismal font, which dates to the 11th or 12th century and is still used today.

9301 Richmond Hwy. (U.S. 1, at Telegraph Rd.), Lorton. ✆ **703/339-6572.** www.pohick.org. Free admission (donations accepted). Mon–Fri 9am–4:30pm; Sun 12:30–4:30pm; services Sun 8 and 10am. From Woodlawn, drive 5½ miles south on U.S. 1.

Woodlawn Plantation and Pope-Leighey House ★ On a hill overlooking the Potomac River valley (but not the river), **Woodlawn Plantation** was a 2,000-acre section of Mount Vernon, of which some 130 acres remain. George Washington gave it as a wedding gift to his adopted daughter (and Martha's granddaughter), beautiful Nelly Parke Custis, and her husband (and Washington's nephew), Maj. Lawrence Lewis, when they married in 1799. Three years later, they moved into the Georgian-style brick mansion designed by William Thornton, first architect of the U.S. Capitol, and furnished it

Fun Facts Our First Tippler

Although George Washington distilled whiskey at Mount Vernon, his favorite alcoholic beverages were port, Madeira, and other sweet wines. He also liked rum punch.

primarily with pieces from Mount Vernon (everything you see dates to before 1840, with about 30% from the Lewis' time).

On the other side of the parking lot, you leap 150 years ahead architecturally to Frank Lloyd Wright's modernistic **Pope-Leighey House,** designed in 1940 for the Loren Pope family of Falls Church. Built of cypress, brick, and glass, the flat-roofed house was created as a prototype of well-designed space for middle-income people.

Give yourself 1½ hours to digest both houses. Normally given on the hour and half-hour, tours are only provided two times a day during March, when Woodlawn is open daily to host one of the nation's largest annual **needlework exhibits.**

9000 Richmond Hwy. ✆ **703/780-4000.** http://woodlawn1805.org or http://popeleighey1940.org. Admission to each house $8.50 adults, $4 students, free for children 4 and younger. Combination tickets $15 adults, $5 students, free for children 4 and younger. Admission may be higher during special events. Mar–Dec Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Guided 35-min. tours twice daily in Mar, otherwise on the hour and half-hour (last tour 4:30pm). Closed Jan–Feb, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From Mount Vernon, drive 3 miles west on Mount Vernon Memorial Pkwy. (Va. 235) to U.S. 1. Entry is straight ahead.

3 THE HUNT COUNTRY ★★

Leesburg: 35 miles NW of Washington, D.C., 115 miles NW of Richmond; Middleburg: 45 miles W of Washington, D.C., 95 miles NW of Richmond

Although horse farms extend southwestward from the Washington suburbs all the way to Charlottesville, the heart of Virginia's Hunt Country beats in the rolling hills of Loudoun and Fauquier counties, essentially between Washington Dulles International Airport and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Colonial tradition of fox hunting still reigns out this way, and steeplechase racing is still something to do on a Saturday afternoon.

Beyond the rapid suburban development west of Dulles airport, the Hunt Country is studded with horse farms bordered by stone fences, plantations with elegant manses, picturesque villages, country inns, and fine restaurants. I enjoy exploring the scenic country roads and getting out of my vehicle in charming little hamlets like Middleburg, Aldie, Upperville, Purcellville, and Hillsboro. Don't be surprised to see rich and famous folk strolling the streets or having a bite of lunch, for some of the world's wealthiest people keep their thoroughbreds here.

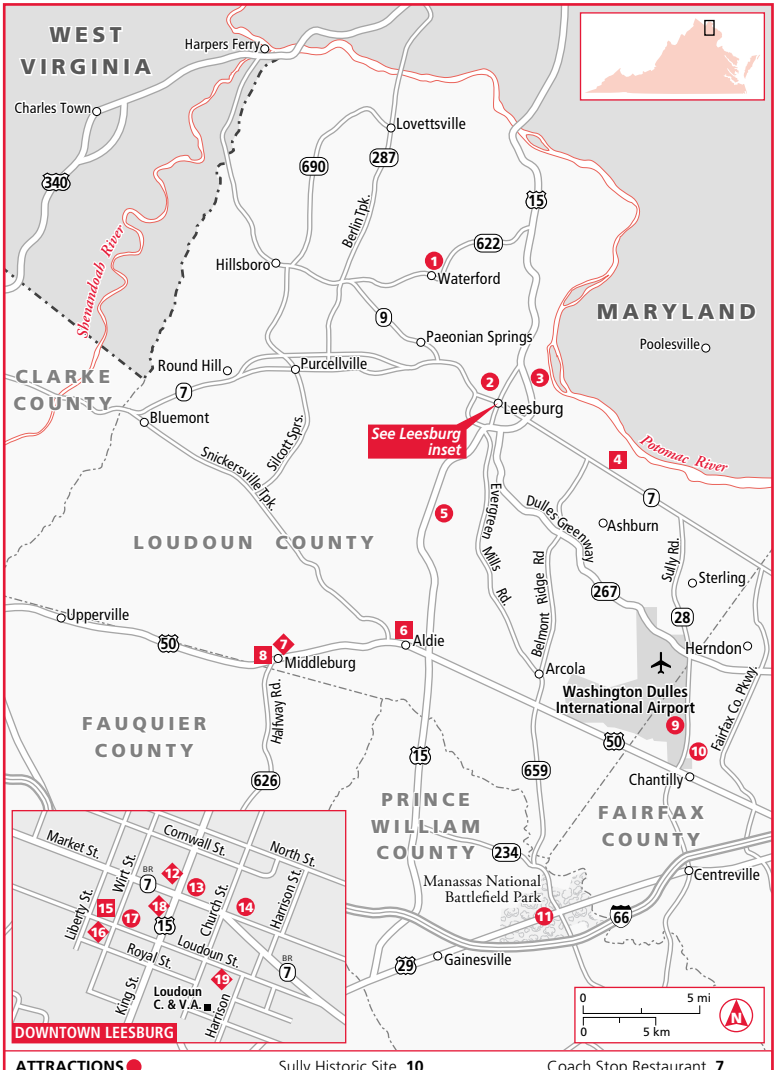
The only time when you can actually visit a few of their horse farms is during the **Virginia Hunt Country Stable Tour** (✆ **540/592-3711;** http://stabletour.middleburg.com), held every Memorial Day weekend.

Others with a little money have started vineyards, making the Hunt Country one of two centers of Virginia's growing wine industry. If you avoid getting tipsy in the tasting rooms, it's easy to wind your way through the farms and hamlets to Manassas, where the North and the South fought two major Civil War battles on the banks of Bull Run, including that conflict's first great contest. You will be following in the horse steps of Col. John Singleton Mosby, the famous Confederate raider who made Hunt Country life miserable for the Yankees.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

For advance information, contact the **Loudoun Convention & Visitor Association,** in 112 South St. SE, Ste. G, Leesburg, VA 20175 (✆ **800/752-6118** or 703/771-2170; www.visitloudoun.org). Its offices and the **Leesburg Visitor Center** are in Market



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Fun Facts The Gray Ghost

The Hunt Country was the stamping ground of the Confederate raider, Col. John Singleton Mosby, whose hit-and-run exploits earned him the nickname "The Gray Ghost." Today, U.S. 50 is the John S. Mosby Highway, and local residents have dubbed it the John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area. You can get a driving tour brochure explaining historic sights from local tourist info offices (see "Visitor Information," above) or directly from the **Mosby Heritage Area,** P.O. Box 1497, Middleburg, VA 20118 (✆ **540/687-6681;** www.mosbyheritagearea.org). Tour guide Dave Goetz has half-day **Mosby's Confederacy Tours** (✆ **540/351-6073** or 540/364-9086; www.mosbystours.com), which can be combined into an all-day outing. Call for prices and reservations.

Station, 2 blocks east of the center of town. The visitor center is open daily from 9am to 5pm except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. In addition to the official "Touring Guide to DC's Wine Country," ask for a copy of the walking-tour guide to Waterford Village (see below).

Middleburg has an information center in the Pink Box, 12 Madison St., Middleburg, VA 22117 (✆ **540/687-8888;** www.middleburg.org). It's open Monday to Friday from 11am to 3pm, Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 4pm.

For Manassas, contact the **Prince William County/Manassas Conference and Visitors Bureau,** 8609 Sudley Rd., Ste. 105, Manassas, VA 20112 (✆ **800/432-1792** or 703/396-7130; www.visitpwc.com). The town of Manassas has a visitor center in the Railroad Depot, 9431 West St. (✆ **703/361-6599**), that's open daily from 9am to 5pm.

For Fauquier County, contact or visit the **Warrenton-Fauquier Visitor Center,** 33 N. Calhoun St., Warrenton, VA 20186 (✆ **800/820-1021** or 540/341-0988; www.visitfauquier.com), open daily 9am to 5pm.

Getting There

BY PLANE Washington Dulles International Airport is on the eastern edge of the Hunt Country, 14 miles southeast of Leesburg and 21 miles east of Middleburg. See "Getting There & Getting Around," in chapter 3, for details.

BY CAR You'll need a vehicle to explore the beautiful back roads of the Hunt Country. Washington Dulles airport has all the major rental firms. There are two routes from the Capital Beltway (I-495) to **Leesburg.** The free but slower way is Va. 7. The significantly faster route is via the Dulles Toll Road (Va. 267) between I-495 and Washington Dulles Airport; it feeds into the Dulles Greenway (✆ **888/707-8870;** www.dullesgreenway.com), a privately financed toll expressway connecting the airport to Leesburg. The toll from the I-495 to Leesburg is about $5. ***Note:*** The Dulles Greenway booths accept only credit cards after 9pm.

Once in downtown Leesburg, you can scout around for an on-street space or leave your vehicle in the **municipal parking garage** on Loudoun Street between King and Wirt streets, where parking is free on weekends. During the week you'll pay 50¢ an hour for the first 4 hours, $1 per hour thereafter, but no more than $5 a day. Many downtown shops will validate your ticket, so take it with you.

To **Middleburg,** you can take U.S. 50 west all the way into town or follow I-66 west to Va. 28 north to U.S. 50 west. U.S. 15 south from Leesburg intersects with U.S. 50

westbound 10 miles east of Middleburg. Park anywhere you can find an on-street space in Middleburg.

LEESBURG ★

Founded in 1758, Leesburg is the largest town in the Hunt Country and a good base for exploring the region. Although not as picturesque as Middleburg, it has considerable charm, with architecture ranging from pre-Revolutionary to late 19th century. The center of Leesburg and its historic district is at the intersection of Market Street (Va. 7 Business) and King Street (U.S. 15 Business), where you'll find the brick **Loudoun County Courthouse,** built in 1895, which contains a mix of Roman Revival and classical elements. Most of what you will want to see is within 2 blocks of this key crossroads, including one of the largest collections of antiques dealers in Virginia.

Exploring Leesburg

The free **Leesburg Town Service Trolley** (✆ **877/77-2708** or 703/777-2420; www.vatransit.org) runs between the Loudoun County Government Center (on Harrison St. in downtown Leesburg) and the Leesburg Corner Premium Outlets via Market Street (Va. 7 Business) every 30 minutes Monday to Friday from 7am until 6:30pm, Saturday from 10am to 9pm, Sunday noon to 6pm. It passes the Leesburg Visitor Center.

Ball's Bluff Regional Park On the northeastern outskirts of town, this pristine regional park is best known for a little circle of stone markers in **Ball's Bluff National Cemetery,** the nation's second-smallest national cemetery. It holds the remains of 54 Union soldiers—only one identified—who fell in the Battle of Ball's Bluff, a Confederate victory in October 1861. Many more Union troops were shot dead as they scrambled down the bluff toward the Potomac River and safety in Maryland. Many of their corpses slid into the river and floated down to Washington, bringing the grim realities of the war to the nation's capital. The park has hiking trails and interpretive displays, and volunteers lead guided tours of the battlefield on weekends from May through October. ***Note:*** There are no public restrooms here.

Ball's Bluff Rd. (northeast Leesburg off U.S. 15 bypass). ✆ **703/737-7800.** www.nvrpa.org. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk. Free walking tours May–Oct Sat–Sun 10am and noon. From U.S. 15 bypass, go east on Battlefield Pkwy. to Ball's Bluff Rd., turn left into parking lot.

Dodona Manor, Home of George C. Marshall ★★ In 1941 Gen. George C. Marshall and his wife Katherine bought Dodona Manor, an early-19th-century manse, when he planned to retire from the U.S. Army. Those plans were interrupted by World War II, when Marshall, then U.S. army chief of staff, was primarily responsible for the victorious military effort. After the war Marshall served as secretary of state (during which time he won the Nobel Peace Prize for the Marshall Plan) and secretary of defense. The house looks exactly like it did in the 1940s and 1950s, with Marshall's own bed, red-leather chair, early black-and-white television, and artwork acquired in China (Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Madame Chiang, and her four maids twice were houseguests). Visits begin with an 18-minute video followed by a 45-minute guided tour of the house. Dodona provides a terrific view of the general's private life, while the George C. Marshall Museum in Lexington (p. 180) explains his outstanding public accomplishments.

212 E. Market St., near east end of Loudon St. ✆ **703/777-1880.** www.georgecmarshall.org. Admission $10 adults, $8 seniors, $5 students 7–17. June–Aug Sat 10am–5pm, Sun–Mon 1–5pm; Sept–May Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm. 45-min. house tours depart as needed. Free parking at Shops at Dodona on E. Market St. (Va. 7).

Kids A Grand Home for the Enola Gay

When the Smithsonian Institution's magnificent National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., ran out of space to house its many historic air- and spacecraft, it built the awesome **Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center** ★★★, 14390 Air and Space Museum Pkwy., in Chantilly (✆ **202/633-1000;** www.nasm.si.edu/udvarhazycenter). This huge Quonset hut–like hangar is home to more than 200 planes and 135 spacecraft. Stars of the show are the *Enola Gay,* the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan in 1945; the space shuttle *Enterprise,* which NASA used for approach and landing tests in the late 1970s; an SR-71 spy plane; and one of Air France's Concorde jetliners. The model spacecraft that starred in the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* is on display, too (it's over in a corner by the *Enterprise*). It's worth going around with a retired pilot on a docent tour (call ✆ **202/633-2563** for the schedule).

The center is open daily from 10am to 5:30pm except Christmas (the observation tower closes at 4:30pm). Admission is free, but parking costs $15 per vehicle. The IMAX theater shows both aviation films and space films ($8.75 for adults, $7.75 seniors, $7.25 for kids 2 to 12). Simulator rides are $7 to $8 per person. Money-saving combination tickets are available. You'll need at least 2 hours here. There's a McDonald's.

The center is off Va. 28 between U.S. 50 and the Dulles Toll Road (Va. 267), near Sully Historic Site on the southeastern edge of Washington Dulles International Airport. **Virginia Regional Transit** (✆ **540/338-1610;** www.vatransit.org) provides shuttle bus service from Washington Dulles International Airport.

Loudoun Museum This small but interesting museum houses memorabilia about the county from American Indian days to the present. It distributes free visitor information and sells helpful walking-tour booklets. A 15-minute presentation sets the scene for your tour of the county. Allow another 30 minutes to explore the museum and its gift shop.

16 W. Loudoun St., at Wirt St. ✆ **703/777-7427.** www.loudounmuseum.org. Admission $3 adults, $1 seniors and students 4–17, free for children 3 and younger. Mon and Wed–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm.

Morven Park On the northwest edge of town, this 1,200-acre estate and its mansion are don't-misses for fox hunting and horse-drawn carriage fans. The original part of Westmoreland Davis Mansion was built as a farmhouse in 1781 but was later expanded as the home of Virginia governor Westmoreland Davis. Normally home to the **Museum of Hounds and Hunting,** it has been undergoing a multiyear restoration, during which you can visit the museum only on a tour. The carriage house holds the impressive **Winmill Carriage Collection.** Allow 1½ hours to take the 45-minute house tour and visit the museums.

17263 Southern Planter Lane, off Old Waterford Rd. ✆ **703/777-2414.** www.morvenpark.org. Admission $7 adults, $1 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Mon and Fri–Sat 11am–4pm; Sun 1–4pm (park closes 6pm). Call for special events. Take Va. 7 Business west 1 mile from the center of town, turn right onto Morven Park Rd., left onto Old Waterford Rd. to park on right.

Oatlands Plantation George Carter, a great-grandson of legendary planter Robert "King" Carter of the Northern Neck (see "Exploring the Northern Neck," in chapter 6), built this mansion in the Federal style in 1804 but later converted it to the Greek Revival manse we see today. His formal terraced garden and its 1810 propagation greenhouse—it's considered America's second oldest—are as interesting as the mansion itself. The plantation's remaining 330 acres also contain unique tree species. Now operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Oatlands hosts numerous events, such as the Antiques at Oatlands show, sanctioned sheepdog trials, a bridal fair, and an American-crafts show (call or check the website for the schedule), plus private events. From mid-November through December, the mansion is all decked out for its annual holiday candlelight tours. You must take a tour to see the house, but you can wander the gardens on your own.

20850 Oatlands Plantation Lane (on U.S. 15, 6 miles south of Leesburg). ✆ **703/777-3174.** www.oatlands.org. Admission $10 adults, $9 seniors and students, $1 children 5–11, free for children 4 and younger. Garden and grounds $7 per person. Mar–Dec Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm. Closed Jan–Feb. Guided 30- to 45-min. house tours depart on the hour. Last tour daily 4pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Dec 24–25.

Sully Historic Site Sully Plantation, a two-and-a-half-story farmhouse, was built in 1794 by Richard Bland Lee, younger brother of Revolutionary War hero Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee (and thus an uncle of Robert E. Lee), who lived here with his wife, Elizabeth Collins Lee, until 1811. The original plantation had more than 3,000 acres. Washington Dulles International Airport now occupies most of the land, leaving the main house and original stone dairy, smokehouse, and kitchen building. Unlike many Virginia plantations open to the public, this one does a fine job of demonstrating the harshness of everyday life for the plantation's enslaved African-American workers on its "Forgotten Road Tours" of the reconstructed slave quarters. You must take a tour to see the house and slave quarters, but you can wander around the grounds and look into the outbuilding windows on your own. Call for a schedule of events, which include an antique car show in June and a quilt show in September.

3601 Sully Rd. (Va. 28). ✆ **703/437-1794.** www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sully. House or slave quarter tours $6 adults, $5 students, $4 seniors and children 5–15. Combination tours $8 adults, $7 students, $6 seniors and children 5–15. Grounds free. Wed–Tues 11am–4pm. Grounds until sunset. Guided 45-min. tours depart on the hour. Call for holiday hours. Sully is on Va. 28, 1/4 mile north of U.S. 50, 9 miles south of Va. 7 in Leesburg.

Outdoor Activities

The Hunt Country's back roads and its portion of the 45-mile **Washington & Old Dominion Railroad (W&OD) Trail** (✆ **703/729-0596;** www.nvrpa.org/parks/wod) bring bicyclists from all over the mid-Atlantic. The W&OD follows an old railroad bed through the heart of the area, crossing South King Street in Leesburg. I've done part of it, and believe me, it's both beautiful and an up-and-down route that can burn your thighs. You might be able to rent wheels in downtown Leesburg from **Bicycle Outfitters,** 19 Catoctin Circle NE, in the Leesburg Plaza Shopping Center (✆ **703/777-2148;** www.bikeoutfitters.com).

Golfers can tee off at the Robert Trent Jones, Jr., and Greg Norman–designed links at **Lansdowne Resort** (see "Where to Stay," below). Gary Player designed the course at **Raspberry Falls Golf & Hunt Club,** 3 miles north of Leesburg on U.S. 15 (✆ **703/779-2555** or 703/589-1042; www.raspberryfalls.com). Less expensive are **Goose Creek Golf Club,** 43001 Golf Club Rd. (✆ **703/729-2500;** www.goosecreekgolf.com), and

the municipal **Brambleton Regional Park Golf Course,** 42180 Ryan Rd., in nearby Ashburn (✆ **703/327-3403;** www.nvrpa.org).

Shopping

Leesburg's numerous **antiques shops** are within a block of the Market Street–King Street intersection and easy to find. Check the website of the **Leesburg Antiques & Collectibles Dealers Association** (www.leesburgantiques.com) for its member shops.

I seldom come here without browsing at **Leesburg Corner Premium Outlets,** 241 Fort Evans Rd. (✆ **703/737-3071;** www.premiumoutlets.com), 2 miles east of downtown at the intersection of the U.S. 15 bypass and Va. 7. It has more than 50 stores and a food court. Many well-known brands are present, including Banana Republic, Brooks Brothers, Burberry, Bass, Gap, J. Crew, Jockey, Liz Claiborne, Nike, Off 5th–Saks Fifth Avenue, Polo Ralph Lauren, Reebok, Tommy Hilfiger, OshKosh B'Gosh, and Rockport. Leesburg Corner is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 7pm.

Where to Stay

A mansion built atop a knoll in 1773 is the centerpiece of the **Holiday Inn at Historic Carradoc Hall,** 1500 E. Market St. (Va. 7), 2 miles east of downtown (✆ **800/465-4329** or 703/771-9200; www.holiday-inn.com). The four suites on the mansion's second floor have country inn–like ambience. The other 122 rooms are in standard motel buildings. The most modern digs in town are at the **Hampton Inn and Suites,** 117 Fort Evans Rd. (✆ **800/HAMPTON** [426-7866] or 703/669-8640; www.leesburg.hamptoninn.com), and the **Comfort Suites Leesburg,** 80 Prosperity Ave. (✆ **866/533-7287** or 540/669-1650; www.comfortsuitesleesburg.com), which has some Jacuzzi-equipped units. Nearby on Va. 7 is the **Best Western Leesburg-Dulles** (✆ **800/528-1234** or 703/777-9400; www.bestwestern.com).

Lansdowne Resort ★★ Primarily a conference center, this luxurious complex between Leesburg and Dulles airport is one of Virginia's better all-around resorts. The centerpiece nine-story hotel building is surrounded by 205 acres alongside the Potomac River. Covering much of that land are 45 holes of golf on four courses, including a Greg Norman–designed 18-holer, all overseen by a clubhouse. An indoor pool off a full-service spa opens to no less than four outdoor pools with water slides and other contraptions to keep both adults and children thoroughly entertained. The four restaurants include a fine-dining venue, a family-style restaurant, an English pub, and a seasonal poolside snack bar. A California wine–country theme distinguishes the guest accommodations, all in the central building. Units on the top floor have marvelous views of the Potomac River Valley. My money goes for an alcove suite with bay windows.

44050 Woodridge Pkwy. (off Va. 7), Lansdowne, VA 20176. ✆ **800/541-4801** or 703/729-8400. Fax 703/729-6096. www.lansdowneresort.com. 296 units. $179–$349 double; $279–$449 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $15; free self-parking. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; children's programs; concierge; executive-level rooms; 3 golf courses; health club; Jacuzzi; 5 pools (1 indoor); room service; sauna; spa; 4 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, fans, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Bed & Breakfasts

While the Norris House Inn (below) is the only place to stay in downtown Leesburg, the county has a dozen or so other bed-and-breakfasts scattered among its rolling hills. Check them out through the **Loudoun County Bed & Breakfast Guild** (✆ **866/771-2597;** www.loudounbandb.com).

The Norris House Inn ★ This three-story redbrick 1760 home in downtown Leesburg includes among its common rooms a parlor and a library, both with oak fireplaces.

Guest-room furnishings are a charming mix of antiques, some with four-poster beds. All have private bathrooms and nonworking fireplaces. The most interesting and private accommodations are in the atticlike third floor. None of the rooms has a telephone. If the weather is good, hosts Carol and Roger Healey serve full breakfasts on the garden veranda.

108 Loudoun St. SW, Leesburg, VA 20175 (btw. Wirt and Liberty sts.). ✆ **800/644-1806** or 703/777-1806. Fax 703/771-8051. www.norrishouse.com. 6 units. $139–$199 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. No children 7 or under. **Amenities:** Access to nearby health club. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer, no phone, Wi-Fi.

Where to Dine

Eiffel Tower Café ★ FRENCH An elegant French country ambience reigns in this rambling clapboard house with large windows that let in plenty of sunlight. The menu is traditional French, such as steak under pepper sauce, but also has southern French influences such as grilled sea bass with couscous and salmon with mushroom risotto. Needless to say, Bastille Day (July 14) is big here.

107 W. Loudoun St. (btw. Wirt and Liberty sts.). ✆ **703/777-5242.** www.eiffeltowercafe.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $20–$29. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–9:30pm.

Lightfoot Restaurant ★★ AMERICAN This fine restaurant occupies an old Romanesque Revival bank building, complete with two-story-high oak-paneled ceiling. A round mezzanine with bar underneath dominates the center of the room, which is too big and thus too noisy for intimate dining. Nevertheless, the chef puts forth an interesting mix of flavors, such as artichoke-and-cheese crusted salmon with orange-tinged couscous.

11 N. King St. (north of Market St.). ✆ **703/771-2233.** www.lightfootrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $22–$30. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight; Sun 10am–10pm (brunch 10am–3pm).

South Street Under DELI/BAKERY Operated by the Tuscarora Mill (see below), this lively bakery and deli is housed in a turn-of-the-20th-century mill, one of the six historic buildings that make up the Market Station shopping and dining complex. It's the best place in town for a breakfast of gourmet coffee and hot-out-of-the-oven pastries, or a lunch of almond-and-grape chicken salad or a made-to-order sandwich on freshly baked ciabatta bread. Order at the counter, and in good weather, grab a table out in the sunny courtyard.

203 Harrison St. (in Market Station, btw. Loudoun and Harrison sts.). ✆ **703/771-9610.** www.southstreetunder.com. Reservations not accepted. Most items $2.50–$7.50. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–6pm; Sat 8am–6pm; Sun 8am–4pm.

Tuscarora Mill ★★ AMERICAN "Tuskie's" brings a casual, publike ambience to this 1898 mill building. High wood-beamed ceilings, grain bins, belts, pulleys, and a scale evoke the building's past in the main dining room, while plants and skylights brighten another room to the side. Delicious luncheon fare includes sandwiches and entrees like sautéed shrimp accompanied by cheese grits and smoked country sausage, which often appears at dinner. The dinner menu changes frequently, but other nighttime standouts might include grilled rainbow trout with Cajun spices.

203 Harrison St. (in Market Station, btw. Loudoun and Harrison sts.). ✆ **703/771-9300.** www.tuskies.com. Reservations recommended, especially on weekends. Main courses $18–$24. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–2:30pm and 5–9:30pm; Sat 11am–3pm and 5–9:30pm; Sun 11am–3pm and 5:30–9:30pm; bar serves light fare Fri–Sat until midnight.

The Wine Kitchen ★★ Finds AMERICAN A relaxed, at-home ambience pervades this small bistro-style wine bar, whose motto is "Eat, Drink, Simply." The decor may be eclectic and unexciting, but there is nothing simple about the well-chosen wine list, which whimsically groups its offerings by region under such headings as Pinot Envy. A few excellent Virginia vintages appear, too. All are offered by the bottle, glass, or sampling floats of three glasses. Back in the kitchen, the chef doesn't allow rich sauces to overwhelm the fresh ingredients he has gathered from local family farms. I had a Spanish mackerel filet perfectly pan-seared and served over a delightful succotash made with edamame instead of limas (or as we Southerners would say, baby soy beans instead of baby butter beans). The servings are modest, so I would order a salad and side along with my main course. Reservations are not accepted so arrive early on weekend evenings.

7 S. King St. ✆ **703/777-9463.** www.thewinekitchen.com. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $12–$17. Sun and Tues–Thurs 11:30am–9pm, Fri–Sat 11:30am–10pm.

WATERFORD VILLAGE ★★

A favorite Sunday drive for us northern Virginians is to the enchanting hamlet of **Waterford,** with so many 18th- and 19th-century buildings that the whole village is a National Historic Landmark. Surrounded by a rolling landscape of 1,420 acres, it offers vistas of farmland and pasture that unfold behind barns and churches. You'll feel as though you've entered an English country scene. A Quaker from Pennsylvania, Amos Janney, built a mill here in the 1740s. Other Quakers followed, and by 1840, most of the buildings now on Main Street and Second Street were in place. In 1870, the railroad bypassed Waterford, and because the pace of change slowed, much of the town was preserved. Affluent professionals who work in Washington, D.C., and the bustling northern Virginia suburbs now own many of the homes. In other words, it's a real town, not a theme park like Williamsburg, so please don't traipse through their front yards.

Usually counted in the few hundreds, the population swells to the many thousands on the first full weekend in October, when local residents stage the annual **Waterford Homes Tours and Crafts Exhibit,** one of the region's best. Concerts and other events are held here throughout the year.

Be sure to get a walking-tour guide booklet at the Leesburg Visitor Center (see "Essentials," above) or from **The Waterford Foundation, Inc.,** P.O. Box 142, Waterford, VA 20197 (✆ **540/882-3018;** fax 540/882-3921; www.waterfordva.org). The foundation's office is in the Corner Store at Main and Second streets and is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Ask the foundation about walking tours, which are given on some Sundays.

Waterford is about 6 miles northwest of Leesburg. Don't take Old Waterford Road; it's not paved. Instead, follow Va. 7 west, turn right onto Va. 9, then right on Clark's Gap Road (C.R. 662) into Waterford.

ON THE LOUDOUN WINE TRAIL

Loudoun County has several vineyards worth visiting. Be sure to pick up a free copy of "Touring Guide to DC's Wine Country" at the Leesburg Visitor Center. It has a map and describes each winery's specialty, location, and business hours.

Rather than risk a DUI charge, you can join **Reston Limousine** (✆ **800/LIMO-141** [546-6141] or 703/478-0500; www.restonlimo.com) on one of its all-day weekend tours to four local wineries. They cost $35 per person. Reservations are required by 5pm Thursday prior to a Saturday or Sunday tour.

Virginia Wine Adventures LLC (✆ **877/VA-GRAPE** [824-7273]; www.vawineadventures.com) also will tailor a tour to your specifications.

Driving myself, I would start at **Tarara Vineyard & Winery,** 13648 Tarara Lane (✆ **703/771-7100;** www.tarara.com), overlooking the Potomac River, where wines are aged in a 6,000-square-foot cave. Their 2002 *viognier* won the Virginia Governor's Cup gold medal, not that they will have any left for you to taste. It's open daily 11am to 5pm, to 6pm on weekends from June through December. Tours and tastings run continuously. From Leesburg, drive north on U.S. 15 to Lucketts, then east on C.R. 662.

Near Tarara and the river on Spinks Road is **Lost Creek Winery** (✆ **703/443-9836;** www.lostcreekwinery.com). It's open Thursday to Monday from 11am to 5pm.

Northwest of Leesburg are **Loudoun Valley Vineyards,** on Va. 9 (✆ **540/882-3375;** www.loudounvalleyvineyards.com), which has tours April to December Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 5pm; and **Breaux Vineyards,** north of Hillsboro on C.R. 671 (✆ **800/492-9961** or 540/668-6299; www.breauxvineyards.com), whose Mediterranean-style tasting room is open daily from 11am to 5pm. On C.R. 690 is **Doukénie Winery** (✆ **540/688-6464;** www.doukeniewinery.com), which is open daily from noon to 6pm.

In the southern part of the county near Middleburg, the most interesting of the local wineries is **Piedmont Vineyards,** on Halfway Road (C.R. 626) about 3 miles south of town (✆ **540/687-5528;** www.piedmontwines.com), a former dairy farm whose barn now houses a tasting room and gift shop. The tasting room is open daily 11am to 6pm.

Off U.S. 50 a mile east of the village, **Swedenburg Estate Vineyard,** 23595 Winery Lane (✆ **540/687-5219;** www.swedenburgwines.com), occupies part of Valley View Farm, founded about 1762. We can thank the late Juanita Swedenburg for bringing the lawsuit in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that interstate wine sales over the Internet are okay. It's open Saturday and Sunday 11am to 5pm, weekdays by appointment. Farther east on Champe Ford Road (C.R. 629), between Middleburg and Aldie, is **Chrysalis Vineyards** (✆ **800/235-8804** or 540/687-8222; www.chrysaliswine.com), noted for its Albariño variety from Spain. It's open daily from 10am to 5pm.

MIDDLEBURG ★★★

One of Virginia's most charming small towns, Middleburg is home to those who can afford to indulge in horses, horse breeding, steeplechase racing, and fox hunting. I am not kidding; you will see jodhpurs and riding boots worn here, although locals complain they are often on "paddock princesses"—who seldom ride but who like to look the part. Whoever's wearing it, this village is so unusual that the weekly rag calls itself the *Middleburg Eccentric.* In addition to real estate notices for farms selling for multimillions, the paper carries ads for firms offering horse clipping and mane pulling. Keep an eye peeled because in addition to being very, very wealthy, the person walking next to you could be very, very famous, too.

Appropriately, Middleburg is home to the **National Sporting Library,** 102 The Plains Rd. (✆ **540/687-6542;** www.nsl.org), a research center housing more than 16,000 books and periodicals about horse sports and fishing, some of them dating to the 17th century. It's open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 4pm, Saturday 1 to 4pm.

Even if I do turn into a chicken when I get near a horse, I thoroughly enjoy pretending I'm filthy rich while strolling Middleburg's shady brick sidewalks—in a polo shirt and khaki trousers, quite appropriate attire here. I like poking my head into high-end shops with names like Crème de la Crème, which purveys "home embellishments." I also grab a shot of caffeine at Cuppa Giddyup.

Tips Grist for the Aldie Mill

Most of the quaint hamlet of **Aldie,** 5 miles east of Middleburg on John Mosby Highway (U.S. 50), is a quintessential Hunt Country hamlet. Its centerpiece is **Aldie Mill Historic Park** (✆ **703/327-9777;** www.aldiemill.org), built in 1807–09 and the only gristmill in Virginia powered by twin water wheels. It has been restored to grind organic grains. The mill is open for milling demonstrations Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5pm. Admission is free. Aldie's antiques stores and other shops merit browsing, and a visit during the annual Aldie Mill Arts Show and Sale on weekends in June, or the Aldie Harvest Festival on the third weekend in October, will be most rewarding.

Middleburg is included on the National Register of Historic Villages, and with 600 residents, it's about the same size today as when it was settled in 1731. You can't get lost here, for the village occupies just 6 blocks along Washington Street (U.S. 50), with just two streets—Federal and Marshall—running parallel on either side. Start your tour at the **Pink Box Visitor Information Center,** on Madison Street a block north of the one traffic signal on Washington Street (see "Visitor Information," earlier in this section). The public pavilion next door is dedicated to the late Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, in honor of the contributions she made "during her happy years in the village."

Nearby Attractions

Drive 1½ miles north of Middleburg on C.R. 626 and you'll come to **Glenwood Park** (✆ **540/687-5662**), Virginia's oldest racecourse in continuous use and home to many meets during the year, including the Virginia Fall Races in early October. Follow the gravel road uphill to the bleachers (look for the gazebo) for a gorgeous view of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Nearby wineries are worth testing. See "On the Loudoun Wine Trail," above.

Manassas National Battlefield Park ★★ The first massive clash of the Civil War took place near a stream known as Bull Run on July 21, 1861. A well-equipped but poorly trained Union army of 35,000 had marched from Washington, where cheering crowds expected them to return victorious. Most of the soldiers were 90-day volunteers who had little knowledge of what war would mean. Instead of an easy march to Richmond, they ran into the Confederate army of Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard and a fierce stand by Rebel Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, who would forever after be known as "Stonewall." The 10 hours of heavy fighting stunned soldiers on both sides, as well as onlookers who had ridden out from Washington to watch. A Confederate victory shattered any hopes that the war would end quickly.

Union and Confederate armies met here again on August 28 through 30, 1862, in the Second Battle of Manassas, which secured Gen. Robert E. Lee's place in history as his 55,000 men soundly defeated the Union army under Gen. John Pope.

Start your tour at the Henry Hill Visitor Center, where a museum, a 45-minute film ($3 admission; shown on the hour 9am–4pm), and a 6-minute battle map program tell the story. These hills are excellent for hiking, and there are a number of self-guided walking tours that highlight Henry Hill, Stone Bridge, and the other critical areas of the two battles. Allow about 2 hours to take in the visitor center and the First Battle walking tour

(it's about 1 mile long). The tour of the entire First Battle area is 6½ miles long. The Second Battle of Manassas, which raged over a much larger area, is covered in a self-guided 12-mile driving tour that will take about 1½ hours.

6511 Sudley Rd. (Va. 234). ✆ **703/361-1339.** www.nps.gov/mana. Admission (good for 3 days) $3 adults, free for children 16 and younger. Movie $3 per person. America the Beautiful passes accepted. Battlefield daily dawn–dusk. Visitor center daily 8:30am–5pm. From Middleburg (about 11 miles), take U.S. 50 east, turn right onto U.S. 15 south, turn left at Va. 234, and continue southeast to Manassas. From I-66, take Exit 47B and go ½ mile north on Va. 234.

Where to Stay

The charming **Middleburg Country Inn,** 209 E. Washington St. (✆ **800/262-6082** or 540/687-6082; www.middleburgcountryinn.com), serves as the town's sole bed-and-breakfast. About 5 miles north of town, the **Goodstone Inn & Estate,** 36205 Snake Hill Rd. (✆ **877/219-4663** or 540/687-4645; www.goodstone.com), is much more luxurious and expensive. It has 13 rooms in a restored carriage house, two cottages, and a spring house set on a 265-acre estate.

Red Fox Inn ★★ The historic Red Fox Inn in the center of Middleburg maintains the romantic charm of early Virginia in its original 1728 stone structure. A later addition is the Stray Fox Inn. The Red Fox has three rooms and three suites, all with wide-plank floors and 18th-century furnishings; several have working fireplaces. Rooms in the Stray Fox also preserve a traditional character with hand-stenciled walls, canopy beds, hooked rugs, and original fireplace mantels. Continental breakfast is served in the dark, cozy **Red Fox Inn Restaurant,** which features a Colonial ambience—low-beamed ceilings, pewter dishes, and equestrian prints lining the walls. The seasonal menus feature regulars like filet mignon, crab cakes, rack of lamb and grilled fish, switching to venison, quail, and other game in autumn.

2 E. Washington St. (P.O. Box 385), Middleburg, VA 20118. ✆ **800/223-1728** or 540/687-6301. Fax 540/687-6053. www.redfox.com. 15 units & suites. $170–$210 double; $195–$325 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

A Bed & Breakfast in Aldie

Little River Inn ★ Value This is no fancy, froufrou bed-and-breakfast, for friendly innkeepers Tucker and Mary Ann Withers have kept this early-19th-century farmhouse in Aldie simple and authentic—like grandma's house—since they opened it 1982. Staying here gives a wonderful glimpse of life in a small Virginia hamlet. Farm animals, a small garden, and a patio are out the back door, which seldom is locked, so peaceful is it here. Fresh flowers, a basket of magazines, and a few decorative pieces of china add warmth. Accommodations range from one room to a cottage of your own (none of them with phones). The main house has five bedrooms, all charmingly furnished with antique pieces; one has a working fireplace. Or you can stay in the log cabin or the Patent House, a small late-1700s domicile, both of which have working fireplaces. Tucker comes over every morning to cook a full breakfast to order. He and Mary Ann give a 10% discount if you book 2 nights.

39307 John Mosby Hwy. (U.S. 50; P.O. Box 116), Aldie, VA 22001. ✆ **703/327-6742.** www.aldie.com. 5 units (4 with private bathroom), 2 cottages. $125–$275 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV (cottages only), no phone.

Where to Dine

My favorite place for sandwiches, a pizza, or especially its curried chicken salad is **Back Street Cafe & Catering,** 4 E. Federal St. (✆ **540/687-3122**), which has outdoor tables

in warm weather. The dinner menu adds pasta main courses. It's open Monday to Friday 11:30am to 2:30pm and 5 to 9pm, Saturday 5 to 9pm.

Coach Stop Restaurant Value AMERICAN You might see a famous face or two among the locals who have been flocking to this diner-style restaurant (albeit one with racks of fine wine behind the counter and lots of horse photos on the walls) since 1958. The menu offers everything from a breakfast of Virginia country ham and eggs or creamed chipped beef on buttermilk biscuits to a dinner of honey-dipped fried chicken. Seating is at the counter or at tables and booths. Ceiling fans keep the breezes moving as you tuck into a hearty meal. Dinner entrees are above-average comfort foods like hand-cut steaks, pork chops, and roast turkey with stuffing and gravy. You can sample shad roe, a Virginia specialty, in early spring.

9 E. Washington St. ✆ **540/687-5515.** www.coachstop.com. Reservations accepted. Breakfast $6.50–$13; sandwiches and salads $9–$12; main courses $17–$23. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7am–9pm; Sun 8am–9pm.

Fredericksburg & the Northern Neck

No journey through Virginia's storied history is complete without a stop in Fredericksburg. Sitting on the banks of the Rappahannock River, it offers both a glimpse into Colonial America and a testament to the vast amount of blood that soaked the state's soil during the Civil War.

I must admit, however, to dreading the 50-mile drive from my home on I-95, because it can be clogged with traffic resulting from suburban sprawl, which is quickly absorbing Fredericksburg within the Washington, D.C., megalopolis.

Modern shopping centers are popping up like weeds around Fredericksburg, but once I have arrived in its remarkably preserved Historic District, I'm thrilled to walk the same streets trod by George Washington and James Monroe, both of whom lived here.

I also like to visit the home of Mary Ball Washington, the first president's mother, who raised her children on a farm across the river and who lived out her days in Fredericksburg near Kenmore Plantation & Gardens, the home of her daughter. Our First Mother is more revered in Fredericksburg than is her son.

For a bit of levity, I poke my head into two of Virginia's more entertaining historic sites, the Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop and the Rising Sun Tavern, both survivors from Mrs. Washington's time.

On the other hand, my spine tingles as I look down from Marye's Heights over the killing fields where Robert E. Lee's dug-in Confederate troops literally mowed down Union forces in 1862. It was the first of four great battles that make Fredericksburg hallowed ground for Civil War buffs.

For a complete escape, I drive southeast from Fredericksburg onto the bucolic Northern Neck (we call it a "neck"; you call it a peninsula) between the Potomac River on one side and the Rappahannock on the other. Large and small creeks crisscross the neck, and bald eagles, blue heron, flocks of waterfowl, and an occasional wild turkey inhabit the unspoiled marshland.

Both Washington and Lee were born on the peninsula, and their birthplaces are easy side trips from Fredericksburg. Otherwise the Northern Neck today primarily attracts weekenders from the mid-Atlantic region who—like me—come here to totally get away from it all.

The star of the Northern Neck show is Irvington, a gentrified creekside hamlet in which reside The Tides Inn and The Hope and Glory Inn, two of the Virginia's finest retreats.

1 FREDERICKSBURG ★★★

50 miles S of Washington, D.C.; 45 miles S of Alexandria; 50 miles N of Richmond

Fredericksburg provides a lesson in American history, especially the Colonial and Civil War eras. Its quaint downtown—a 40-square-block National Register Historic District—is well worth your time. In addition to its historical attractions, the district has a college-town

ambience thanks to the **University of Mary Washington** (✆ **540/654-2000;** www.umw.edu), whose Colonial-style campus is 8 blocks west of downtown via William Street.

The town came into being in 1728 as a 500-acre frontier settlement on the banks of the Rappahannock River. George Washington spent his formative years across the river at Ferry Farm, where he supposedly tossed a coin across the Rappahannock and never told a lie about chopping down the cherry tree. His mother lived out her life in a house he purchased for her on Charles Street, and she is buried on what was then Kenmore Plantation, home of his sister, Betty Washington Lewis.

Fredericksburg was a hotbed of revolutionary zeal in the 1770s, and many of its citizens shed both blood and treasure during the War for Independence. Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and other founding fathers met here in 1777 to draft what later became the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedoms, the basis for the First Amendment guaranteeing separation of church and state. James Monroe practiced law here before spending his final years near Jefferson at Charlottesville.

Equidistant from Richmond and Washington—the two rival capitals—the Fredericksburg area was one of the Civil War's biggest bones of contention. The two sides fought a major battle in town and others nearby at Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse. Stonewall Jackson was mistakenly shot by his own men at Chancellorsville; his amputated arm is buried at Ellwood Plantation. Clara Barton and Walt Whitman nursed wounded Federal soldiers in Chatham mansion, just across the river. Cannonballs embedded in the walls of some prominent buildings, as well as the graves of 17,000 Civil War soldiers, are grim reminders of that tragic era. The battlefields are now part of a national park.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

The **Fredericksburg Visitor Center,** 706 Caroline St. (at Charlotte St.), Fredericksburg, VA 22401 (✆ **800/678-4748** or 540/373-1776; fax 540/372-5687; www.visitfred.com), offers free maps, many restaurant menus, and walking tour brochures following the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg and of the downtown Historic District. It also shows a 14-minute video that will get you oriented, and it sells a block ticket to the major sites (see "Money-Saving Passes," below). The center is open Memorial Day to Labor Day daily from 9am to 7pm; the rest of the year, hours are 9am to 5pm. It's closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

On the southwestern edge of town, the **Spotsylvania County Visitor Center,** 4704 Southpointe Pkwy., Fredericksburg, VA 22407 (✆ **800/654-4118** or 540/891-6670; www.spotsylvania.org), specializes in attractions south of town. It's in the Southpoint Shopping Center on U.S. 1 at Exit 126 off I-95 and is open daily from 9am to 5pm. The county also has a visitor center in the historic district of Spotsylvania, near the battlefields (✆ **540/507-7996**).

There also is a **Virginia Welcome Center** at Mile 130 on southbound I-95.

Getting There

BY CAR On a good traffic day, Fredericksburg is about an hour from Richmond or Alexandria via I-95. To reach the Historic District from I-95, take Exit 130A and follow Va. 3 east. Bear left on William Street (Va. 3 Business).

There are no parking meters in Fredericksburg but many on-street spaces are limited to 2 hours. The public parking lots on Sophia Street are unlimited.

Value Money-Saving Passes

The **Fredericksburg Visitor Center** (see "Essentials," above) sells a **Fredericksburg Timeless Pass,** which includes admission to Belmont, Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center, Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop, James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library, Kenmore, Mary Washington House, Rising Sun Tavern, and George Washington's Ferry Farm. It does not expire and costs $32 for adults, $10 for students 6 to 18. Or you can opt for a 1-day pass for $16 adults, $5 for students. Those are substantial savings off individual admissions.

Note: The admission prices given in the listings below are to the individual properties without a block ticket. Most of the block-ticket attractions are closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and December 24, 25, and 31.

BY PLANE The nearest airports are Ronald Reagan Washington National, Washington Dulles International (see "Getting There" under "Alexandria" in chapter 5), and Richmond International (see chapter 10).

BY TRAIN Fredericksburg's **Amtrak** station (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) is at Lafayette Boulevard and Princess Anne Street, on the southern edge of the Historic District, 3 blocks from the Fredericksburg Visitor Center.

Virginia Railway Express (✆ **800/743-3873** or 703/497-7777; www.vre.org) operates six early-morning commuter trains from Fredericksburg's Amtrak station to Union Station in Washington, D.C., from Monday through Friday. One return train departs Washington at 12:55pm, with five more beginning at 3:35pm. Frankly, they are more useful for a day trip into D.C. than for getting to Fredericksburg. Check the website for schedules and fares.

Getting Around

The best ways to see the historic district are on foot or by a trolley or horse-drawn carriage tour (see below), but **Ride Fred** (✆ **540/372-1222;** www.ridefred.com) provides public bus service around the area from Monday through Friday (through Sat when classes are in session at the University of Mary Washington). Most useful is the Downtown Loop (Rte. F5), which passes the Amtrak Station and the university. Fares are 50¢ per person.

EXPLORING FREDERICKSBURG

A majority of the Historic District attractions are along Princess Anne Street within an easy walk from the visitor center, but don't miss several notable monuments along broad **Washington Avenue** north of Kenmore Plantation & Gardens. Mary Ball Washington is buried at **Meditation Rock,** a spot where she often came to pray and meditate; there's a monument there in her honor. Just across the way is the **Thomas Jefferson Religious Liberty Monument,** commemorating Jefferson's Fredericksburg meeting with George Mason, Edmond Pendleton, George Wythe, and Thomas Ludwell Lee in 1777 to draft the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom. The **Hugh Mercer Monument,** off Fauquier Street, honors the doctor who died fighting in the Revolutionary War and whose apothecary shop is now a museum (see below).

BY WALKING TOUR On Saturday during summer you can stroll around 8 blocks of the Historic District and learn about the area's history and architecture with the informative **Hallowed Ground Tours** (✆ **540/809-3918;** www.hallowedgroundtours.com). Held in conjunction with the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center (see "More Attractions," below), the 1-hour tours leave the visitor center at 10am and cost $3 for adults and $1 for children. The company will tailor other tours to your desires; call or check the website for details.

An evening option is to stroll around the historic haunts with **Ghosts of Fredericksburg Tours,** 623 Caroline St. (✆ **540/654-5414;** www.ghostsoffredericksburg.com). The 90-minute walks depart the visitor center parking lot at 8pm Thursday to Monday in July, Friday through Sunday in August, and Friday and Saturday September through December. They cost $10 per person (children under 7 go free). Reservations are required.

BY TROLLEY OR HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE You can sit and explore the Historic District via motorized trolley or horse-drawn carriage, both of which leave from the visitor center. **Trolley Tours of Fredericksburg** (✆ **540/898-0737;** www.fredericksburgtrolley.com) pass 35 historic sights. The 1¼-hour narrated tours usually leave at 10:30am, noon, 1:30, and 3:30pm from June through October. They depart at 10:30am and 1:30pm the rest of the year. Fares are $17 for adults, $6 for children 17 and younger.

An alternative is to clip-clop your way around with the **Old Towne Carriage Company** (✆ **540/371-0094**), whose 45-minute narrated rides cost $17 for adults, $10 for children younger than 10. They operate from April through December daily from 10:30am to 3:30pm.

The visitor center sells tickets for all tours.

The Top Attractions

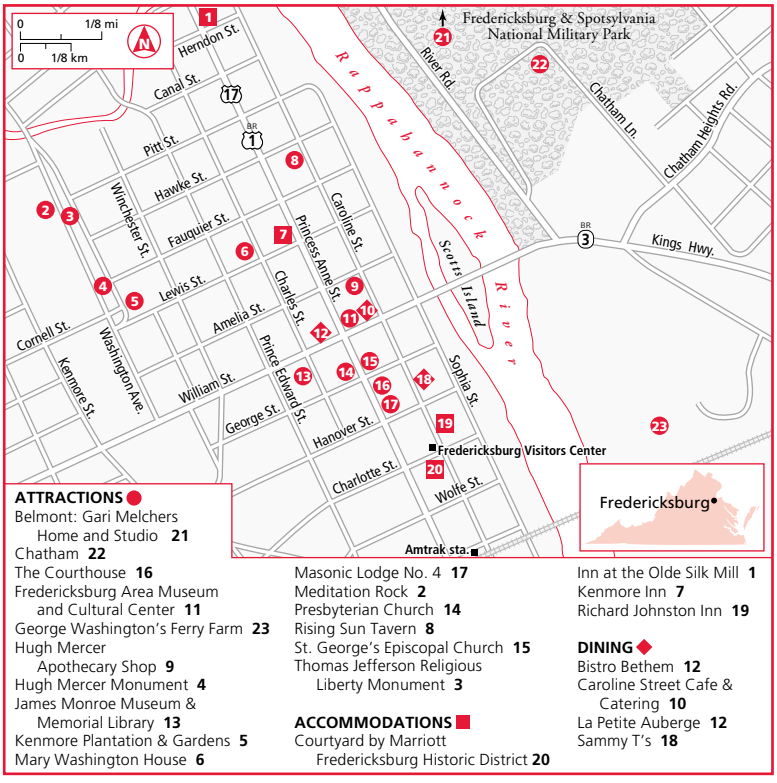
Belmont: Gari Melchers Home and Studio

Situated on 27 hillside acres overlooking the falls of the Rappahannock River, Belmont began as an 18th-century farmhouse (the central six rooms of the house date to the 1790s) and was enlarged to a 22-room estate by a later owner. Although the house has historic attributes, its fame comes from being furnished with the art treasures, family heirlooms, and European antiques of famed American artist Gari Melchers, who lived here from 1916 until his death in 1932. His wife, Corinne, gave Belmont to the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1955. It'll take about an hour to see the orientation video and take a guided tour of the house. You can explore the gardens and studio on your own.

224 Washington St. (Va. 1001). ✆ **540/654-1015.** www.garimelchers.org. Admission $10 adults, $5 children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Thurs–Tues 10am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31. Guided 30-min. house tours depart on hour and half-hour (last tour 30 min. before closing). From the visitor center, take U.S. 1 north across the Falmouth Bridge, turn left at the traffic light in Falmouth, and go ¼ mile up the hill; turn left on Washington St. (C.R. 1001) to Belmont.

Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop ★★ Kids

Born in Scotland in 1726, Dr. Hugh Mercer became friends with George Washington when they were colonels during the French and Indian War of the 1750s. He opened this apothecary shop in 1761 and practiced here until returning to service as a brigadier-general in the American Revolution. He was with Washington during the famous crossing of the Delaware River on Christmas night of 1776 and died of bayonet wounds at the Battle of Princeton a few days later. (The warrior tradition continued in his family—Gen. George S. Patton was his great-great-great-grandson.) Today this is one of the most entertaining Colonial attractions in Virginia. It's a don't-miss for children, who often let out *"Oooos"* when



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hostesses in period dress show how Mercer practiced 18th-century medicine in this little shop of horrors. Optional tours run continuously, so you can join one when you get here and see what you missed on the next. A garden tour explains how plants were used as medicine in those days.

1020 Caroline St. (at Amelia St.). ✆ **800/678-4748** or 540/373-3362. www.apva.org/hughmercer apothecary. Admission $5 adults, $2 for children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 9am–4pm, Sun 10am–4pm; Nov–Feb Mon–Sat 10am–2pm, Sun noon–4pm. Half-hour tours run continuously (last tour 30 min. before closing).

James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library ★ Although overshadowed by Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, James Monroe was one of the most distinguished Americans of their time. He served as a U.S. senator; minister to France, England, and Spain; governor of Virginia; secretary of state; secretary of war; and fifth president of the United States (1817–25). As president, he promulgated the Monroe Doctrine, which kept European powers from meddling in the Western Hemisphere. Monroe practiced law in Fredericksburg from 1786 until 1789, when he moved to Charlottesville and built his home, Highland (now known as Ash Lawn–Highland; see chapter 7), near his close friend Jefferson's Monticello. The furnishings are original Monroe possessions. You can

Fun Facts **Giving Meaning to "Sawbones"**

In Dr. Hugh Mercer's Apothecary Shop you can see how he used a heated cup to remove boils and carbuncles, a knife to cut out cataracts, an ominous-looking key to extract teeth, and a saw for amputating limbs. The latter instrument gave rise to the early slang term for doctors: sawbones.

peruse correspondence from Jefferson (don't miss the letter written partially in code), Madison, and Benjamin Franklin. Here, too, are the gun and canteen Monroe used in the American Revolution. He and Washington were the only presidents to fight in the War of Independence. Also on display are two Rembrandt Peale portraits of Monroe and silhouettes of the Monroes by Charles Willson Peale. You must take a 30-minute guided tour, given throughout the day as demand dictates.

908 Charles St. (btw. William and George sts.). ✆ **540/654-1043.** www.umw.edu/jamesmonroemuseum. Admission $5 adults, $1 children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Nov daily 10am–5pm; Dec–Feb daily 10am–4pm. Guided 30-min. tours given throughout the day (last tour 30 min. before closing).

Kenmore Plantation & Gardens ★★ This stately Georgian mansion was built in the 1770s for George Washington's only sister, Betty Washington, and her husband, Fielding Lewis, one of Fredericksburg's wealthiest men and a financier of the American Revolution—so much so that he had to sell Kenmore to liquidate his debts. He died a few weeks after the victory at Yorktown. Today, the house sits on three of the original plantation's 1,300 acres and has been architecturally restored to its Colonial elegance. The 40-minute tours explain the lives of the inhabitants and their servants. In addition to the elaborate molded plaster ceilings and cornices, much of the woodwork and paneling are original. Be sure to explore the famous gardens, restored and maintained according to the original plans by the Garden Club of Virginia. The George Washington Foundation owns the home and sponsors many special programs.

1201 Washington Ave. (btw. Lewis and Fauquier sts.). ✆ **540/373-3381.** www.kenmore.org. Admission $8 adults, $4 children 6–17, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct daily 10am–5pm. Nov–Dec daily 10am–4pm. Guided 40-min. house tours depart 15 and 45 min. past the hour until 4:15pm. Closed Jan–Feb, Thanksgiving, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31.

Mary Washington House ★ George Washington bought this white-frame house in 1772 for his mother, Mary Ball Washington, so she would be near her daughter's home at Kenmore Plantation (see above). Mary Washington was then 64 years old and had been living across the river at Ferry Farm since 1738 (see "More Attractions," below). Legend says that Lafayette found Mrs. Washington in her garden when he visited during the Revolution to pay his respects (her sundial still keeps time). Her son came in 1789 to receive her blessing before going to New York for his inauguration as president. He never saw her again, for she died later that year. You must take a 30-minute guided tour (they depart continuously) to see the indoor exhibits, including a mirror she considered to be her "best dressing glass."

1200 Charles St. (at Lewis St.). ✆ **540/373-1569.** www.apva.org/marywashingtonhouse. Admission $5 adults, $2 children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm; Nov–Feb Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun noon–4pm. Guided 30-min. tours run continuously.

Moments

Semper Fi—The U.S. Marine Corps Museum

Rising like a beacon beside I-95 about halfway between Fredericksburg and Alexandria is the sloping steel tower atop the terrific **National Museum of the Marine Corps** ★★★, 18900 Jefferson Davis Hwy. (U.S. 1) in Triangle (✆ **877/635-1775** or 703/784-6115; www.usmcmuseum.org). The shape of this stunning, modernistic building evokes the famous scene of leathernecks raising the U.S. flag over Iwo Jima during World War II—the 210-foot-tall tower slopes at the same angle as their improvised battlefield flag pole. It stands above a glass-ceiling rotunda at the museum's center, from which are suspended Marine Corps aircraft dating back to World War I. Exhibits in a labyrinth of rooms trace the corps' history since its inception in 1775. Sounds from numerous audiovisual effects can be a bit distracting, but many of the high-tech exhibits are especially good at re-creating battlefield reality. For example, a Korean War battle takes place in a chilled room to capture wintertime conditions in that conflict, while a Vietnam skirmish takes place in stifling tropical heat. You'll also feel what it was like to fly in a noisy, shaking Vietnam-era helicopter. You will need at least 3 hours to digest it all. Two cafes are present, so plan to have lunch before or after a 1½-hour tour, usually guided by an ex-Marine docent; tours depart at 10am, noon, and 2pm. Admission is free. The museum is open from 9am to 5pm daily except Christmas. Take Exit 150 off I-95 at Triangle, go east to U.S. 1, and turn south to the museum.

Rising Sun Tavern ★★ The Rising Sun was originally a residence, built in 1760 by Charles Washington, George's youngest brother, but beginning in the early 1790s it served as a tavern for some 30 years. You'll be thoroughly entertained during the 30-minute tours, perhaps led by a tavern wench—an indentured servant sentenced to 7 years for stealing a loaf of bread in England. The Rising Sun Tavern was a proper high-class tavern, she explains, not for riffraff. The gentlemen congregated over Madeira and cards in the Great Room or had a rollicking good time in the Taproom over multicourse meals and many tankards of ale. Meanwhile, ladies were consigned to the Retiring Room, where they would gossip and do needlework. You must take a tour, but you can join the one in progress when you get here and see what you missed on the next.

1306 Caroline St. (at Fauquier St.). ✆ **540/371-1494.** www.apva.org/risingsuntavern. Admission $5 adults, $2 for children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–4pm; Nov–Feb Mon–Sat 11am–3pm, Sun noon–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31. Guided 30-min. tours run continuously.

More Attractions

Chatham Across the river from downtown, this mansion was built between 1768 and 1771 by wealthy planter William Fitzhugh, who supported the Revolution politically and financially. George Washington visited twice. Now the headquarters of the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park (see "The Civil War Battlefields,"

below), during the Civil War Chatham served as headquarters for Federal commanders—Lincoln visited his generals here—and as a Union field hospital where American Red Cross founder Clara Barton and poet Walt Whitman assisted the wounded. You can tour five rooms and the grounds on your own. The dining room and parlor have exhibits on Chatham's owners and its role in the Civil War, which is explained by a 12-minute film. Also worth watching is a 30-minute video about the war's impact on Fredericksburg's civilian populace. National Park Service employees are on hand to answer questions and lead guided tours.

120 Chatham Lane. ✆ **540/371-0802.** www.nps.gov/frsp. Free admission. Daily 9am–4:30pm. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25. Take William St. (Va. 3) east across the river and follow the signs.

The Courthouse Built in 1853, this courthouse is a fine example of Gothic Revival architecture. In fact, its architect, James Renwick, also designed St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and the original Smithsonian "Castle" and Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. Exhibits in the lobby include copies of Mary Ball Washington's will and George Washington's address to the city council in 1784.

Princess Anne and George sts. ✆ **540/372-1066.** Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–4pm.

Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center This very good local museum occupies the 1816 Town Hall in Market Square, although its entry and many exhibits are in a former bank building across William Street. In existence since 1733, Market Square was the center of trade and commerce in Fredericksburg for more than a century, while Town Hall served as the city's social and legal center. Lafayette was entertained here in 1824 with lavish parties and balls, and the building continued to serve its original function until 1982. You'll see permanent exhibits about the area's history. As the son of a Mason, the highlight for me is the collection of artifacts, including a Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington and the 1668 Bible on which he took the oath when joining **Masonic Lodge No. 4** (at 803 Princess Anne St.).

1001 Princess Anne St. (at William St.). ✆ **540/371-3037.** www.famcc.org. Admission $7 adults, $2 children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 1–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31.

George Washington's Ferry Farm The first president was 6 years old in 1738 when his family moved to this farm across the river from Fredericksburg. It was here that George purportedly confessed to chopping down the cherry tree. He and his siblings took a ferry across the river to school in Fredericksburg. After their father, Augustine Washington, died in 1743, their mother Mary Ball Washington stayed on the farm until 1772, when George bought her the house in town (see above), where she lived out her life near her daughter, Betty Lewis. Union soldiers camped on the farm during the Civil War. The Washingtons' 1741 house is long gone, but archaeologists continue to discover and interpret new finds, including confirmation of its foundation and cellars. Artifacts are on display in the visitor center, where interpreters will answer questions. The George Washington Foundation, which also owns Kenmore Plantations & Gardens (see above), has many special programs here.

268 Kings Hwy. (Va. 3). ✆ **540/370-0732.** www.ferryfarm.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 children 6–17, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct daily 10am–5pm. Nov–Dec daily 10am–4pm. Closed Jan–Feb, Thanksgiving, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31. Take Va. 3 east across Rappahannock River, turn right after 3rd traffic signal.

The Presbyterian Church The local Presbyterian congregation, which dates to the early 1800s, completed this Greek Revival building in 1833. It was shelled during the

Civil War, and, like St. George's Episcopal Church (below), served as a hospital where Clara Barton nursed Union wounded. Cannonballs in the front-left pillar and scars on the walls of the loft and belfry remain. The present church bell replaced one that was given to the Confederacy to be melted down for making cannons.

810 Princess Anne St. (at George St.). ✆ **540/373-7057.** www.fredericksburgpc.org. Free admission. Services Labor Day to June Sun 8:30 and 11am; June–Aug Sun 8:30 and 10am (go to church office at other times).

St. George's Episcopal Church Martha Washington's father and John Paul Jones's brother are buried in the graveyard of this church, and members of the first parish congregation included Mary Ball Washington and Revolutionary War generals Hugh Mercer and George Weedon. The original church on this site was built in 1732; the current Romanesque Revival structure, in 1849. During the Battle of Fredericksburg, the church was hit at least 25 times. It served as a Union hospital during the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864, when 10,000 wounded soldiers filled every available building in town (the New York City Police Department returned a stolen communion set in 1866). Note the three signed Tiffany windows.

905 Princess Anne St. (btw. George and William sts.). ✆ **540/373-4133.** www.stgeorgesepiscopal.net. Free admission. Mon–Sat 8am–10pm (unless a wedding is taking place Sat); Sun 8am–8pm, with services at 8 and 10:30am (7:45 and 10am during summer).

SHOPPING

Fredericksburg is one of Virginia's top treasure-troves for antiques and collectibles shoppers, as you will quickly note by more than 40 stores along Caroline, Sophia, and William streets. My antiques-hunting friends come here for more reasonable prices than in metropolitan areas such as Alexandria, Richmond, and Norfolk. The visitor center has brochures describing each store's specialty (see "Essentials," earlier in this chapter).

RIVER CRUISES

Operated by the same company that goes to Tangier Island from Reedville on the Northern Neck (p. 116), **Rappahannock River Cruises** (✆ **804/453-2628;** www.tangiercruise.com) sends the stern-wheel *City of Fredericksburg* down the river from the city dock on Sophia Street from May through October. Most popular are the 2-hour lunch trips departing at noon Tuesday through Saturday. Fares are $26 for adults, $16.50 for children. The company also has dinner and Sunday brunch cruises. Call for reservations.

WHERE TO STAY

You'll find chain hotels of every ilk off I-95. Most convenient to the Historic District is the strip along Va. 3 at Exit 130. This also is Fredericksburg's major suburban shopping area, with the Spotsylvania Mall and a multitude of other centers, plus a host of national chain restaurants. Worthy motels here include the **Best Western Fredericksburg** (✆ 800/528-1234 or 540/371-5050), **Best Western Central Plaza** (✆ 800/528-1234 or 540/786-7404), **Hampton Inn** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 540/371-0330), **Hilton Garden Inn** (✆ 877/STAY-HGI [782-9444] or 540/786-7404), **Ramada Inn–Spotsylvania Mall** (✆ 800/272-6232 or 540/786-8361), and an inexpensive **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 540/786-8881).

The newest properties are along U.S. 1 at Exit 126 south of town, another rapidly developing commercial area known as Southpoint. These include the **Comfort Inn Southpoint** (✆ 800/228-5151 or 540/898-5550), **Days Inn Fredericksburg South** (✆ 800/325-2525 or 540/898-6800), **Fairfield Inn by Marriott** (✆ 800/228-2800 or

540/891-9100), a **Hampton Inn** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 540/898-5000), **Ramada Inn & Conference Center** (✆ 800/2-RAMADA [272-6232] or 540/898-1102), **Sleep Inn Southpoint** (✆ 877/424-6423 or 540/710-5500), and two more cheapies, the **Econo Lodge South** (✆ 800/800-55-ECONO [553-2666] or 540/898-5440) and another **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 540/898-7100).

Courtyard by Marriott Fredericksburg Historic District ★ Across Charlotte Street from the Fredericksburg Visitor Center, this 4-story hotel opened in 2009 on the site of the Indian Queen Tavern, which operated between 1771 and 1832. While the brick building seems at home in the Historic District, the decor inside is modern and high tech, beginning with a row of computer work stations just off the atrium lobby. As at all Courtyards, the spacious guest quarters are equipped for doing business, with desks and ergonomic chairs. A bistro-style restaurant serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner, while a convenience outlet is open 24 hours for coffee and snacks.

620 Caroline St., Fredericksburg, VA 22401. ✆ **800/321-2211** or 540/373-8300. Fax 540/373-8355. www.marriott.com. 98 units. $119–$149 double. Valet parking $10, free self-parking. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Bed & Breakfasts

In addition to the inns listed below, the Historic District is host to **The Little White House B & B,** 1107 Princess St. (✆ **540/538-2196**), where owner Reine-Marie Wojciechowski has two bedrooms in the Charles Dick House, the oldest residence in Fredericksburg (1740); and **The Schooler House Bed & Breakfast,** 1303 Caroline St. (✆ **540/374-5258;** www.theschoolerhouse.com), an 1891 house with four fireplaces.

Inn at the Olde Silk Mill ★ Value Staying at this unpretentious, antiques-laden inn is like visiting your great-grandmother—provided yours owns a house with 28 bedrooms. These units evoke the Colonial and Victorian eras, with some reproductions but mostly with marble-top walnut dressers, rag rugs, canopied beds, and other antiques. It's a hub for value-conscious Civil War buffs and people participating in Civil War reenactments—don't be surprised to see musket-toting Blues and Grays in the lobby. Although amenities are scarce, the staff is friendly and helpful. The property was known as the Fredericksburg Colonial Inn until 2007, when it was renamed to reflect the original purpose of the industrial-look building.

1707 Princess Anne St. (at Herndon St.), Fredericksburg, VA 22401. ✆ **540/371-5666.** Fax 540/371-5884. www.innattheoldesilkmill.com. 28 units. $99–$159 double. Rates include light continental breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, Wi-Fi.

Kenmore Inn An elegant white pediment supported by fluted columns and a front porch with wicker chairs welcome you to this late 1700s mansion in the Historic District on property originally owned by George Washington's brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis. A sweeping staircase leads to the guest rooms—a handsome assortment of both cozy and spacious accommodations furnished with a mix of antiques. Expect to find four-poster beds with lacy canopies, antique chests, and walls hung with botanical prints and engravings. The house has eight working fireplaces, four in the bedrooms. The inn serves full breakfasts to its guests in the main floor dining room, which turns into a fine-dining restaurant at dinner.

1200 Princess Anne St. (at Lewis St.), Fredericksburg, VA 22401. ✆ **540/371-7622.** Fax 540/371-5480. www.kenmoreinn.com. 9 units. $130–$175 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

Moments **Carl's Famous Frozen Custard**

My sweet tooth gets satiated at the famous **Carl's,** 2200 Princess Anne St. (no phone), which has been making frozen custard with the same machines since 1947 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The cones, shakes, and malts come in a choice of vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, and one other flavor. Carl's is open daily 11am to 11pm from mid-February through mid-November.

Richard Johnston Inn ★★ Two 18th-century brick row houses are joined to form this elegantly restored inn across busy Caroline Street from the visitor center. The downstairs sitting rooms and dining room, where breakfast is served (continental during the week, full on weekends), are invitingly furnished. The Oriental rugs and mahogany furniture in the second-floor rooms in one house create a more formal atmosphere than in the others, which feature rockers and four-poster beds that lend a country charm. Third-floor dormer rooms are attractive, with low ceilings, dormer windows, and murals on their walls. The inn's original kitchen house also exudes charm, with brick floors, two queen-size beds, and a private entrance from the courtyard. The spacious Isabella's Suite also offers a private courtyard entrance as well as two queen-size beds, a kitchenette, and a separate living room. The Loft Suite apartment overlooking the courtyard also has a kitchenette and has a king-size bed in its loft. The two courtyard rooms here are pet-friendly, although you cannot leave pets unattended.

711 Caroline St. (btw. Hanover and Charlotte sts.), Fredericksburg, VA 22401. ✆ **877/557-0770** or 540/899-7606. Fax 540/899-6837. www.therichardjohnstoninn.com. 9 units. $105–$190 double. Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Pet fee $25. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette (2 units), no phone, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

The swankiest restaurant in town is the **Kenmore Inn Dining Room** (see "Where to Stay," above), which brags an extensive wine cellar. **Claiborne's,** 200 Lafayette Blvd. (✆ **540/371-7080**), in the restored train station at the southern end of Caroline Street, provides good low-country Southern chow. Top Italian is the venerable **Ristorante Renato,** 422 William St. (✆ **540/371-8228**).

I get my morning caffeine and pastries at **Hyperion Espresso** (✆ **540/373-4882**), a college-town-style coffee shop at the corner of William and Princess Anne streets. The old-fashioned soda fountain still operates at **Goolrick's Pharmacy** (✆ **540/373-9878**), on Caroline Street at George Street.

Brock's Riverside Grill, 503 Sofia St. (✆ **540/370-1820**), at Lafayette Boulevard beside the river, is a pub-style joint with an outdoor bar where I slake my thirst after walking around the Historic District. In cool weather you'll find me tippling in the **Blarney Stone,** 715 Caroline St. (✆ **540/371-PINT** [7468]).

Bistro Bethem ★★ AMERICAN The young husband-wife team of Blake and Aby Bethem (he's the chef) offer refined Southern cuisine at this bistro next door to La Petite Auberge (see below). An Italian restaurant once occupied the premises, and Blake uses the leftover clay pizza oven to finish off choices such as rib-eye steak with onion rings; bow-tie pasta with green peas and apple-wood-smoked bacon; and seared tuna with polenta cake and braised collard greens. His signature dish is a salad of grilled hearts of romaine lettuce with local bleu cheese, roasted red tomatoes, and pickled onions and carrots. The Bethem's wine list has won awards.

309 William St. ✆ **540/371-9999.** www.bistrobethem.com. Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses $23–$28. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–10pm; Sun 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–9pm.

Caroline Street Cafe & Catering DELI This bright, art-filled deli is my favorite spot for a light lunch. The smoked chicken is especially good, either sliced or as its own salad. So are the white-bean chili and a spicy summer gazpacho-style soup featuring strawberries as well as fresh local veggies. Be sure to check the daily specials on the blackboard behind the counter before placing your order.

1002 Caroline St. ✆ **540/373-1645.** www.carolinestreetcatering.com. Reservations not accepted. Salads and sandwiches $6.50–$7.50. AE, MC, V. Mon and Wed-Thurs 11am–4pm; Fri–Sun 11–8pm.

La Petite Auberge ★ FRENCH Christian Etienne Reanult's delightful restaurant was designed to look like a garden, an effect enhanced by white latticework and garden furnishings. Unpainted brick walls are hung with copper pots and cheerful oil paintings, and candlelit tables are adorned with fresh flowers. A cozy lounge adjoins. Christian and his classically trained son, Raymond, change their menu daily. They might offer salade niçoise, soft-shell crab amandine, poached salmon with hollandaise sauce, and sirloin steak with béarnaise sauce.

311 William St. (btw. Princess Anne and Charles sts.). ✆ **540/371-2727.** Reservations recommended, especially at dinner. Main courses $10–$24. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Sat 11:30am–2:15pm and 5:30–10pm; early-bird dinner Mon–Thurs 5:30–7pm.

Sammy T's Value AMERICAN/VEGETARIAN This popular, inexpensive pub offers a relaxed, tasteful setting and a creative health-food orientation. In fact, it's Fredericksburg's best option for vegetarians and vegans. It has a publike ambience, with large overhead fans, a pressed-tin ceiling, knotty-pine booths, and a long oak bar. Everything is made from scratch, with an emphasis on natural ingredients. The lunch and dinner menus offer many vegetarian and vegan items, such as vegetarian lasagna, a bean-and-grain burger, and a spicy black-bean cake. Entrees like burgers, fried oysters, and crab cakes are possibilities for meat and seafood eaters.

801 Caroline St. (at Hanover St.). ✆ **540/371-2008.** www.sammyts.com. Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches $4.50–$9.50; main courses $7.50–$17. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 10:30am–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 10:30am–10pm.

2 THE CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS ★★★

Fredericksburg has never forgotten its Civil War victories and defeats in the battles of Fredericksburg and at Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse, 12 to 15 miles west of the city. The battles were part of three Union attempts to advance from Washington, D.C., to Richmond between December 1862 and May 1864. Only the last one succeeded. Today, the sites are beautifully preserved in the National Park Service's **Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park,** which also includes the Stonewall Jackson Shrine, where the great Confederate general died after being mistakenly shot by his own men.

Although park headquarters are at Chatham (p. 103), start at the **Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center,** 1013 Lafayette Blvd. (U.S. 1 Business), at Sunken Road (✆ **540/373-6122**), where you can get detailed tour brochures and watch a 22-minute video (shown on the hour and half-hour) to get you oriented. The bookstore across the parking lot rents and sells the audio-tour tapes or CDs that are essential to get the most

Tips A Battle Plan for Seeing the Battlefields

Although you can drive around the battlefields in less than a day, you'll need 2 days to take the full 75-mile audio-guided auto tours of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania battlefields. Allow a minimum of 30 minutes at each of the two visitor centers and 3 hours for each of the four battlefield audio tours, plus driving times in between.

I strongly recommend the audio tour CDs available at the Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville visitor centers (there's a different recording for each battle; $4.95 to rent or $12.95 to purchase each CD). Renting a portable player along with them will allow you to get out of your car and still hear the informative commentary.

Although you can start at the Chancellorsville Visitor Center, I prefer to tour the battlefields in the order in which the conflicts occurred: Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse. Spend the first day at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, and the second at The Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse, where the battles happened within days of each other. The Stonewall Jackson Shrine at Guinea Station is 18 miles southeast of Spotsylvania Courthouse; go there last.

out of your visit (see "A Battle Plan for Seeing the Battlefields," above). Be sure to pick up the park service's main brochure, which has a detailed map, and pamphlets for each of the sites. If you want more detailed information, the bookstore is packed with Civil War literature.

Admission to the battlefields is free. The Fredericksburg visitor center is open daily from 9am to 5pm with extended hours in summer and on spring and fall weekends. The actual battlefields are open daily from sunrise to sunset. You can drive through the battlefields but the visitor centers are closed New Year's Day and Christmas.

There's also a visitor center at **Chancellorsville** (see below). The Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse battlefields have shelters with exhibits explaining what happened. Park rangers give **guided tours** of each battlefield daily during summer and on spring and autumn weekends. Call the visitor centers for the schedule.

For advance **information,** contact the Superintendent, Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park, 120 Chatham Lane, Fredericksburg, VA 22405 (✆ **540/371-0802;** www.nps.gov/frsp).

BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

The Battle of Fredericksburg took place from December 11 to December 13, 1862, when the Union army under Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside crossed the river into Fredericksburg via pontoon bridges. Burnside made a huge mistake when he sent the body of his 100,000 men uphill against Lee's 75,000 troops, most of them dug in behind a stone wall along Sunken Road at the base of Marye's Heights. The ground below the heights became a bloody killing field as Lee's cannon, firing from the hill, mowed down the Yankees.

Sunken Road—restored to look as it did in 1862—starts at the visitor center at the base of Marye's Heights. You can examine the road and follow the gently sloping pathway

up the 40-foot-high heights for the fine view that sends chills down my spine as I think of the lives lost on the fields below. Park rangers lead 35-minute guided tours of the road several times daily during the summer and on spring and fall weekends. The park also has summertime children's programs here.

BATTLE OF CHANCELLORSVILLE

President Lincoln fired Burnside after the Marye's Heights massacre. Under Gen. Joseph Hooker, Burnside's replacement, the Union forces crossed the river north of Fredericksburg in late April 1863 and advanced to Chancellorsville, a crossroads 10 miles west of Fredericksburg on the Orange Turnpike (now Va. 3). In a surprise attack, Stonewall Jackson flanked Hooker's line on May 2 and won a spectacular victory. Jackson was inadvertently shot by his own men that same night. He was taken 5 miles west to Ellwood Farm, where his left arm was amputated and buried in the family cemetery (see "Battle of the Wilderness," below). He was later moved to a farm near Guinea Station, where he died (see "Stonewall Jackson Shrine," below). By then, Lee had driven the Union army back across the Rappahannock.

Stop at the **Chancellorsville Visitor Center** (✆ **540/786-2880**), 12 miles west of Fredericksburg on Va. 3, to see another audiovisual orientation and related exhibits. Once again, auto-tour tapes and CDs are available at the bookstore. The center is open daily from 9am to 5pm, with extended hours in summer and on spring and autumn weekends. Be sure to get a pass here to see the gravestone over Jackson's arm at Ellwood Farm.

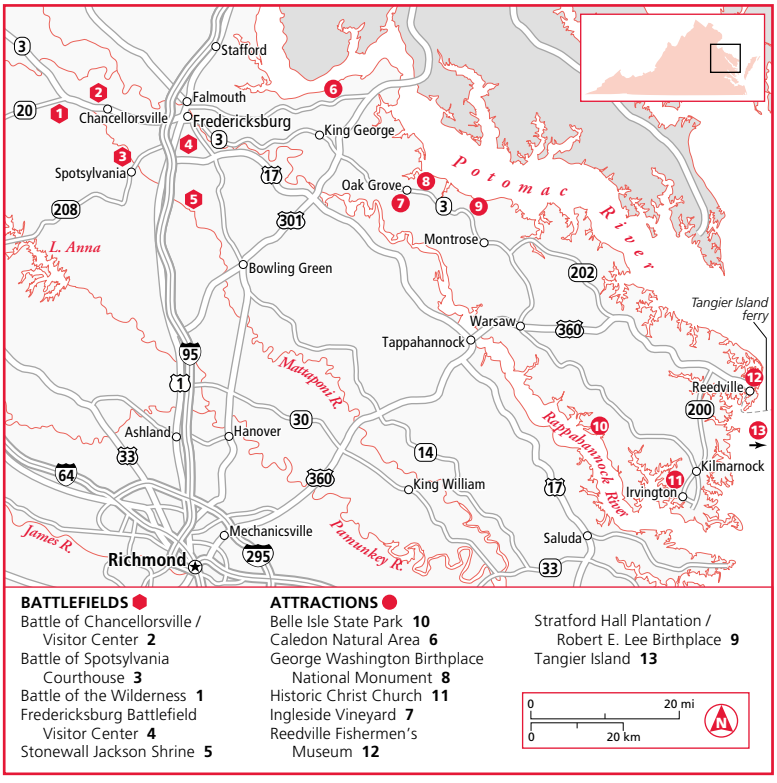
BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

A year later, under the direction of the aggressive Ulysses S. Grant, Union forces once again crossed the Rappahannock and advanced south to Wilderness Tavern, 5 miles west of Chancellorsville near what is now the junction of Va. 3 and Va. 20. Lee advanced to stop him, thus setting up the first battle between these two great generals. On May 5 and 6, 1864, the armies fought in the tangled thickets of The Wilderness. The battle was a stalemate, but instead of retreating as his predecessors had, Grant backed off and went around Lee toward his ultimate target, Richmond, via the shortest road south (now Va. 208).

The battle raged around **Ellwood Farm,** which during the Battle of Chancellorsville had served as the Confederate hospital where Stonewall Jackson's arm was amputated and buried. You can see his arm's gravestone at Ellwood Farm, which is open Saturday and Sunday during summer. At other times you must get an Ellwood pass at the Chancellorsville Visitor Center.

BATTLE OF SPOTSYLVANIA COURTHOUSE

Lee quickly regrouped and tried to stop Grant 2 days later at Spotsylvania Courthouse, about 18 miles southeast of The Wilderness. Taking advantage of thick fog and wet Confederate gunpowder, Union troops breached the Southerners' line. When Lee's reinforcements arrived, the sides spent 20 hours in the war's most intense hand-to-hand combat at a site known as Bloody Angle. During the fighting, Lee built new fortifications to the rear, which he successfully defended. Instead of pushing the fight to the finish, however, Grant again backed off, flanked his entire army around Lee's, and resumed his unrelenting march toward Richmond. It was the end of major fighting in the Fredericksburg area, as the war moved south to its ultimate conclusion 11 months later at Appomattox.



There's an exhibit shelter on Grant Drive, where park rangers lead walking tours daily during summer, weekends in spring and fall. Call the Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville visitor centers for details.

STONEWALL JACKSON SHRINE

Now part of the park, the **Stonewall Jackson Shrine** (✆ **804/633-6076**) is in the wood-frame plantation office where the general spent the last 6 days of his life after being shot and mortally wounded by his own men at Chancellorsville. Jackson's doctors hoped that he would recover sufficiently to board a train at nearby Guinea Station for the ride to Richmond, but it was not to be. Jackson's body was taken to Lexington, where he was buried with full honors (see chapter 8). The office is the only structure remaining at the plantation and appears as it did when Jackson died. About half of its contents are original, including his deathbed.

The shrine is open 9am to 5pm daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day, Saturday to Monday the rest of the year. It's at the junction of C.R. 606 and C.R. 607, about 27 miles southeast of Chancellorsville, 18 miles southeast of Spotsylvania Courthouse. From I-95, take Exit 118 at Thornburg and follow the signs east on C.R. 606.

3 THE NORTHERN NECK ★

The peninsula between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers known as the Northern Neck stretches 100 miles southeast from Fredericksburg to the Chesapeake Bay. A popular weekend getaway for us residents of nearby metropolitan areas, this rural land of rolling hills serrated by quiet tidal creeks is the ancestral home of the Carters, the Washingtons, and the Lees, who created large plantations on the riverbanks. Its hills are still punctuated by agricultural and small fishing villages (they speak in terms of counties here, not towns).

To my mind, the Northern Neck has three areas of interest. Heading east from Fredericksburg on Va. 3, you first come to **George Washington's Birthplace National Monument,** where the first president was born in 1732 on Pope's Creek Plantation, and **Stratford Hall,** the magnificently restored Lee plantation. Nearby, the **Ingleside Vineyards** offer tours and tastings. These three sites can easily be seen on a day trip from Fredericksburg.

A left turn on Va. 202 will take you northeast to the end of the Northern Neck, at Smith Point on the Chesapeake. Here you can explore the town of **Reedville,** founded as a menhaden fishing port in 1867 by Capt. Elijah Reed, a New England seafarer. Reedville soon became rich, and its captains and plant owners built magnificent Victorian-style homes. One plant still processes the small, toothless fish, which is of little use for human consumption but valuable as meal, oil, and protein supplements used in everything from Pepperidge Farm cookies to Rustoleum paint. You can learn all about the menhaden at the local fishing museum. From Reedville you can depart on cruises to remote Tangier Island out in the bay.

Va. 200 will take you 20 miles south to my favorite spot on the neck, the genteel creekside hamlet of **Irvington,** home of **Christ Church,** perhaps the nation's best example of Colonial church architecture. Irvington and its neighboring villages of White Stone and Kilmarnock constitute one of Virginia's most affluent retirement communities. I stay in or near Irvington and use it as a base to explore the Northern Neck's eastern end.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION For advance information about the area, contact the **Northern Neck Tourism Council,** P.O. Box 1707, Warsaw, VA 22572 (✆ **800/393-6180** or 804/333-1919; www.northernneck.org). The council's offices are at 479 Main St. (Va. 3 Business) in the Regional Center. The walk-in **Virginia's Potomac Gateway Welcome Center** (✆ **540/633-3205**) is on U.S. 301 just south of the Potomac River Bridge. The **Reedville Fishermen's Museum** (p. 113) has information about Reedville and the Smith Point area. Information about Irvington is available at **www.irvingtonva.org**.

GETTING THERE You'll need a car to get here. From Fredericksburg, go east on Va. 3, which traverses the length of the Peninsula. From Fredericksburg, Washington's Birthplace is 40 miles; Irvington, 95 miles. The "fast" route from Fredericksburg to Reedville and Irvington is via U.S. 17 and U.S. 360. From Richmond, take U.S. 360; from Williamsburg, use U.S. 17 and Va. 3.

EXPLORING THE NORTHERN NECK

You can easily see George Washington's Birthplace, Stratford Hall Plantation, and the Ingleside Vineyards as a day trip from Fredericksburg or as stops on the way to Irvington.

To do this area justice, plan on at least 3 days if you go on to Reedville and Irvington, 4 days if taking an all-day cruise to Tangier Island.

George Washington Birthplace National Monument ★ Although it's a re-creation of Popes Creek Plantation, where the first president was born on February 22, 1732, this national monument shows what 18th-century farm life was like when Washington's father, Augustine, established a tobacco plantation here in 1718. George lived here until the family moved to Fredericksburg when he was 3½ years old. The manor house burned on Christmas Day in 1779 and was never rebuilt. The original site is outlined by oyster shells. Built in 1930–31, Memorial House and its workshop and farm re-create a typical plantation of that era (a guide will take you through the house). You can see the site in 1½ to 2 hours. Start at the visitor center, where a 14-minute film explains plantation life and a display case holds Washington family artifacts uncovered during archaeological digs here. Park rangers offer talks and conduct guided tours from the visitor center. The graves of 32 Washington family members, including George's father, are in a small burial ground on the property.

1732 Popes Creek Rd. (Va. 204, off Va. 3), Colonial Beach. ✆ **804/224-1732.** www.nps.gov/gewa. Admission $4 adults, free for children 16 and younger (good for 7 days). National Park and America the Beautiful passes accepted. Daily 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Historic Christ Church ★★★ Elegant in its simplicity and virtually unchanged since 1735, this is the most pristine of Virginia's many Colonial-era churches. It was the gift of planter and businessman Robert "King" Carter, the richest man in the colonies at that time. His father, John Carter, four of his five wives, and two infant children are interred in the chancel (their graves are to the left as you face the Ten Commandants on the wall). King Carter's tomb is outside, on the north side of the church. Among the Carter descendants are eight governors of Virginia, two United States presidents (the Harrisons), a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and Gen. Robert E. Lee. Carter descendants still operate Shirley Plantation (p. 279) on the James River.

The three-tiered pulpit is in excellent condition, all 26 original pews remain, and a marble baptismal font dates to the 1660s. The museum displays archaeological artifacts from Corotoman, King Carter's lavish Rappahannock River plantation manse, which burned down only 4 years after he finished it in 1725. Take a 30-minute guided tour through the church and allow another 30 minutes or so to wander among the gravestones.

C.R. 646, off Va. 200, 1 mile north of Irvington. ✆ **804/438-6855.** www.christchurch1735.org. Free admission (suggested $5 donation). Church daily 9am–5pm; museum and 30-min. guided tours Apr–Nov Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 2–5pm. Worship services held in the church Sun at 8am from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Closed Dec.

Reedville Fishermen's Museum Paying homage to Reedville's ancient way of earning a living, this museum consists of the 1875 William Walker House, the town's oldest building, which has been restored to appear as it did in 1900. The Covington Building houses a permanent collection and special exhibits commemorating the watermen who participate in the town's leading industry, menhaden fishing, which dates to 1874 when Capt. Elijah Reed arrived here. An 11-minute video sets the stage for a visit to the workboats out on the creek; they were refurbished in the museum's shop by volunteers, who also built the *Spirit of 1608,* a replica of the boat Capt. John Smith used to explore the Chesapeake region in 1608.

Tips Taking a Lunch Break

There are few places to dine in this area, so have lunch in the log cabin–style **Stratford Hall Dining Room** at Stratford Hall Plantation. It offers worthy Virginia-style cream of crab soup, crab cake and fried oyster sandwiches, chef salads with chicken or cured ham, ham biscuits, and meals of fried chicken, crab cakes, flounder, or ham, all at reasonable prices. Open Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 3pm.

504 Main St., Reedville. ✆ **540/453-6529.** www.rfmuseum.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 seniors, free for children 12 and younger. Mid-Mar to Apr Sat–Sun 10:30am–4:30pm; May–Oct daily 10:30am–4:30pm; Nov to mid-Jan Sat–Sun 10:30am–4:30pm. Closed mid-Jan to mid-Mar. From Va. 3 east, take U.S. 360 east to Reedville.

Steamboat Era Museum Although the building housing this interesting local museum looks like a railway station, inside it's devoted to the late-19th- and early-20th-century era when steamboats were the major means of transportation between Norfolk and Baltimore. The steamers stopped at waterside towns such as Irvington, which sported an opera house and several hotels and speak-easies in those days. An introductory video about the era sets the stage. Model ship lovers will especially enjoy master craftsman Bill Wright's four examples showing the transition from sail to steam.

156 King Carter Dr., Irvington. ✆ **804/438-6888.** www.steamboateramuseum.org. Free admission ($4 suggested donation). May–Dec Thurs–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun 1–4pm. Jan–Apr by appt.

Stratford Hall Plantation ★★★ This is one of the great houses of the South, magnificently set on 1,600 acres above the Potomac, renowned for its distinctive architectural style and for the illustrious members of the Lee family who lived here. Thomas Lee, a planter who served as governor of the Virginia colony, built Stratford in the 1730s. His son, Richard Henry Lee, made the motion for independence in the Continental Congress in 1776, and he and Francis Lightfoot Lee were the only brothers to sign the Declaration of Independence. Cousin Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, a hero of the Revolution, coined the phrase about his friend George Washington, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Light-Horse Harry and his wife, Anne Hill Carter of Shirley Plantation (p. 279) on the James River, were the parents of Robert E. Lee, who was born here in 1807.

The H-shaped manor house, its four dependencies, coach house, and stables have been brilliantly restored. Brick chimney groupings that flank the roofline are some of the mansion's most striking features. The paneled Great Hall, one of the finest rooms to have survived from Colonial times, runs the depth of the house and has an inverted tray ceiling. On the same floor are bedrooms and a nursery, where you can see Robert E. Lee's crib. The fireplace in the nursery is trimmed with sculpted angels' heads.

Start at the visitor center, where tours begin. You can go inside the mansion and its dependencies only on 30-minute tours led by costumed guides, who will meet you at one of the outbuildings. You can easily spend another 2 hours strolling the gardens, meadows, and nature trails on this 1,600-acre estate, still operated as a working farm.

You can stay overnight or longer in Stratford Hall's guesthouses and cabins, all rustic on the outside but comfortable inside.

483 Great House Rd. (Va. 214; 2 miles north of Va. 3), Stratford. ✆ **804/493-8038.** www.stratfordhall.org. Admission $10 adults, $9 seniors and military, $5 children 6–11, free for children 5 and younger. Grounds-only pass $5 adults, $3 children. Mar–Dec daily 9:30am–4pm; Jan–Feb Sat–Sun 9:30am–4pm (tours on the hour 10am–4pm). Closed Jan 1, Dec 25, and Dec 31.

ON THE WINE TRAIL

The Northern Neck has five operating vineyards and wineries that have bound together to form the **Chesapeake Wine Trail** (✆ **800/393-6180;** www.chesapeakebaywinetrail.com), whose website will help you plan an inebriated tour.

The oldest, largest, and most convenient to visit from Fredericksburg is **Ingleside Vineyards,** 5872 Leedstown Rd., Oak Grove (✆ **804/224-8687;** www.ingleside vineyards.com), off Va. 3 on the Rappahannock River side of the Peninsula. You'll get here before arriving at Washington's birthplace and Stratford Hall, so go easy on tasting the Virginia Brut, a handcrafted sparkling wine.

Others are Irvington's **White Fences Vineyard & Winery** (✆ **804/438-5559;** www.whitefencesvineyard.com), a relative infant whose Meteor Bright reds and whites already have won awards; **Athena Vineyards & Winery,** 3138 Jessie Dupont Memorial Hwy., Heathsville (✆ **840/580-4944;** www.athenavineyards.com); **Belle Mount Vineyards,** 2570 Newland Rd., Warsaw (✆ **800/335-5564** or 804/333-4700; www.bellemount.com); and **Oak Crest Vineyards & Winery,** 8215 Oak Crest Dr., King George (✆ **540/663-2812;** www.oakcrestwinery.com), near Colonial Beach.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Country roads winding through gently rolling hills and crossing picturesque creeks make the Northern Neck a great place to ride your bicycle. One excellent route makes a loop from Reedville via U.S. 360 and C.R. 652 and 644. On C.R. 644, you'll cross the Little Wicomico River via the free Sunnybank Ferry. Some bed-and-breakfasts provide bikes for the guests, but there are no places to rent them here, so bring your own.

The Northern Neck has more than 1,100 miles of shoreline and 6,500 acres of nature preserves, making it an important stop for birds migrating along the Atlantic Flyway. It also has a substantial population of bald eagles. To see the eagles, head to the **Caledon Natural Area,** on Va. 218 near King George (✆ **540/663-3861;** www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/cal.shtml), which has observation tours along the Potomac River and guided eagle-watching tours. Another fine place to view the migratory birds is at **Belle Isle State Park** (✆ **804/462-5030;** www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/bellisle.htm), off C.R. 354 on the Rappahannock River northwest of Irvington, which has guided canoe trips as well as horseback riding on land. The **Northern Neck Audubon Society,** P.O. Box 991, Kilmarnock, VA 22482 (www.northernneckaudubon.org), organizes field trips.

Fun Facts Barefoot Stomping in Irvington

Irvington's White Fences Vineyard & Winery (✆ **804/438-5559**) sponsors the **Irvington Stomp** (www.irvingtonstomp.com), one of the Virginia's most unusual festivals. During the festival you can actually stomp grapes with your bare feet, just as they do in Europe. Admission is $10 for adults, $5 for children 6 to 16, free for kids 5 and under. The stomp is held on Saturday of Labor Day weekend.

A Cruise to Tangier Island ★★

Out in the Chesapeake Bay lies one of my favorite places to get away from it all: the quaint and remote **Tangier Island.**

Barely above sea level and short on dry land (many deceased are buried in their loved ones' front yards), tiny Tangier was discovered by Capt. John Smith in 1608 and permanently settled in 1686. In fact, the local accent hearkens back to the Elizabethan English. It's not a Nantucket or a Martha's Vineyard, however, for Tangier's charm is in visiting a remote and authentic fishing village—the "Soft Shell Capital of the World," as evidenced by the many crab pens lining the channel into the harbor.

Tangier also has the best beach in Virginia—actually an arm of sand stretching for more than a mile south of the island. You will have all or most of this narrow peninsula to yourself once the daily cruise boats have returned to the mainland.

Weather permitting, **Tangier Island Cruises** (✆ **804/453-2628;** www.tangiercruise.com) leave from Buzzard Point Marina, off U.S. 360 near Reedville, daily at 10am from May 15 to October 15. The voyage takes 90 minutes. The return trip leaves Tangier at 2pm, leaving you with 2½ hours on the island. Round-trip fare is $25 for adults, $12 for children 6 to 11, free for children 5 and younger, and $5 for bicycles. Reservations are required. You can also get here from Crisfield, Maryland, on the eastern shore.

Local citizens await your arrival to take you on a 10-minute island tour by oversize golf cart (there are few cars or trucks on the island). You can bring your

Another good spot for birding and much more is **Westmoreland State Park** (✆ **804/493-8821;** www.dcr.virginia.gov/parks/westmore.htm), off Va. 3 between George Washington's Birthplace and Stratford Hall. It's the Northern Neck's largest park and is equipped with a campground, rental cabins, hiking trails, boating, and swimming.

Golfers come here primarily to play the **Golden Eagle** course at The Tides Inn (p. 118), one of Virginia's best, and the nearby **Tartan Course** (✆ **804/438-6200;** www.tartangolfclub.com). Irvington also is home to the **King Carter Golf Course,** on Old Saint Johns Road (✆ **804/435-7842;** www.kingcartergolfclub.com), a fine public course where you can play for less than $50.

Reedville is the jumping-off point for fishing charters on the Chesapeake Bay, where you might hook a fighting bluefish or snag a succulent rockfish (sea bass). In Reedville call Capt. Jim Hardy of ***The Ranger II*** (✆ **804/453-6635**) or **Pittman's Charters** (✆ **804/453-3643;** www.genepittmancharters.com). The latter operates the *Mystic Lady II,* a 25-passenger party boat.

You can learn to sail at **Premier Sailing School** (✆/fax **804/438-9300;** www.sailingschool.net), which is based at The Tides Inn (p. 118).

The Tides Inn also is home to the ***Miss Ann,*** a 127-foot yacht that makes lunch and sunset cruises from Carter's Creek out on the Rappahannock River. A Saturday morning "whiskey run" relives pre-liquor-by-the-drink days when local residents had to cross the

own bicycle or rent a bike or golf cart at the wharf, although you can walk to almost every place worth seeing within 30 minutes.

Most day-trippers opt for all-you-can-eat, family-style lunches at **Hilda Crockett's Chesapeake House** (✆ **757/891-2331;** www.chesapeakehouse tangier.com). I prefer **Fisherman's Corner** (✆ **757/891-2900**), which serves fresh soft shell crabs. **Waterfront Restaurant,** at the cruise boat dock (✆ **757/891-2248**), has sandwiches.

After lunch walk up Main Street to the **Tangier Island History Museum** (✆ **302/234-1660;** www.tangierhistorymuseum.org), which has informative exhibits and free kayaks for exploring the creeks winding through the marshes and actually cutting the island in two.

You can overnight at Hilda Crockett's, although I stay at **Bay View Inn Bed and Breakfast** (✆ **757/891-2396;** www.tangierisland.net), in a 1904 Victorian house on the island's western side. The upstairs "honeymoon" room has a small balcony with a fine view of the bay. **Sunset Inn Bed & Breakfast** (✆ **757/891-2535;** www.tangierislandsunset.com) actually is closer to the mile-long beach. All three charge about $130 and up for a double and accept MasterCard and Visa.

Note: Tangier is a "dry" island, so bring your own alcoholic beverages. And be prepared to dine early since the restaurants close at 7pm.

river to buy alcoholic beverages. Call The Tides Inn (✆ **800/843-3746** or 804/438-5000) for the schedule, prices, and reservations.

WHERE TO STAY

Stratford Hall Plantation (p. 114) now has guesthouses and cabins. Rates are $122 a night, including a plantation tour.

Of several bed-and-breakfasts on the Northern Neck, **Back INN Time** (✆ **804/435-2318;** www.backinntime.biz) is between Irvington and Kilmarnock, thus convenient to Historic Christ Church and golf at the Tides Inn. Reedville has **The Gables** (✆ **804/453-5209;** www.thegablesbb.com), a Victorian mansion built on the Main Street waterfront by a ship's captain who installed his schooner's wooden mast through the top two floors. Near Reedville, **Fleeton Fields Bed & Breakfast** (✆ **800/497-8215** or 804/453-5014; www.fleetonfields.com) sits beside a creek in the hamlet of Fleeton.

The closest motel to Irvington and Reedville is the **Holiday Inn Express,** 599 N. Main St. (Va. 3), Kilmarnock (✆ **800/465-4329** or 804/436-1500; www.holidayinn.com), which has an outdoor pool.

The Hope and Glory Inn ★★★ One of the most fascinating and romantic country inns I've ever had the pleasure of patronizing, this property occupies a three-story schoolhouse built in the 1890s. Unusual for its time, it was coeducational, albeit with separate

front doors for boys and girls. Today, those doors lead from the front porch into a large main lounge. A broad center staircase leads to seven guest rooms plus a sitting room (the latter opens to a large deck). On the other side is the cozy Detention Bar, where today's naughty students are "detained" while they sample vintages from Irvington's White Fences Vineyard & Winery. Out back, lush gardens almost hide the 6 light and airy clapboard cottages, the most romantic accommodations here. Although every unit has its own bathroom, guests with an exhibitionist streak can use the gardens' outdoor bathroom complete with claw-foot tub, rainmaker shower, and pedestal sink—all shaded by large trees and surrounded by a wooden privacy fence.

The inn's own chef prepares gourmet breakfasts served in the school building or by a fountain in the courtyard, and you can sign up for lively Saturday night dinners at the chef's table with sharp-witted owners Dudley and Peggy Patteson. You will have free use of bicycles and the town's two tennis courts across the street, and you can pay to use the spa and other facilities at The Tides Inn nearby (see below).

Note that other than radios with CD players, none of the on-site units have telephones, TVs, or other such modern distractions, which would interfere with romance, The Hope and Glory's raison d'être. If you need all the comforts of home, or have a family in tow, then opt for one of the inn's Tents at Vineyard Grove, on the edge of White Fences Vineyard & Winery about a mile away. These aren't tents but modern houses, each drawing its inspiration from carpenter Gothic cottages that grew out of revival "tent meetings" in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In addition to phones and TVs, each has three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a full kitchen, and a screened porch overlooking the headwater marshes of Carter's Creek. All guests can use a secluded outdoor pool at the tents. Your pet can stay with you in certain cottages.

65 Tavern Rd. (at King Carter Dr.; P.O. Box 425), Irvington, VA 22480. ✆ **800/497-8228** or 804/438-6053. Fax 804/438-5362. www.hopeandglory.com. 22 units (all with private bathroom). $175–$290 double; $225–$695 cottage. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. Pets accepted, $40 fee. **Amenities:** Bar; bikes; access to nearby health club; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV (tents only), hair dryer, kitchen (tents only), no phone (in main bldg.), Wi-Fi.

The Tides Inn ★★★ Renowned for its exceptional Golden Eagle course, the Tides Inn has been one of Virginia's top golf resorts since 1947. The sprawling complex consists of several low-rise buildings on the banks of Carter's Creek. In the clapboard Main Building, the dining room and Chesapeake Club lounge both have outstanding views down the creek to the Rappahannock River. Rooms in the Main Building have fine views, too, but those in the cottagelike Windsor or Lancaster Houses are more spacious and feature large bathrooms, living areas, and, in some cases, balconies overlooking the creek. Other hotel-style rooms are in the East, Garden, and Terrace wings, where the ground-floor units have patios. A British Raj theme dominates, with ceiling fans and Indian mahogany furniture adorning the rooms, and wooden floor-to-ceiling plantation shutters shading some rooms.

The full-service spa, the marina, the golf course, and the restaurants are open to the public. Men must wear jackets at dinner in the main dining room (they'll lend you one), but you can partake of the same menu in the adjacent Chesapeake Club in "resort casual" attire. The Premier Sailing School operates here, and the 127-foot yacht *Miss Ann* takes guests cruising. Your small pets can enjoy the luxuries, too.

480 King Carter Dr. (P.O. Box 480), Irvington, VA 22480. ✆ **800/843-3746** or 804/438-5000. Fax 804/438-5552. www.tidesinn.com. 106 units. $170–$329 double; $195–$355 suite. $23 per room daily resort fee. Golf, spa, sailing, and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking free 1st night, $10 thereafter; free self-parking. From Va. 3, take Va. 200 south 2 miles to Irvington, turn right at the sign to end of King Carter Dr. Pets accepted (in some rooms), $25 per animal. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; children's programs; concierge; golf course; health club; pool; room service; spa; tennis courts; watersports equipment. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

Don't forget the Saturday night Chef's Table dinners at The Hope and Glory Inn and the dining rooms at The Tides Inn (see above).

The Local DELI In the same small shopping complex as Nate's Trick Dog Cafe (see below), this shop serves as Irvington's version of Starbucks in the morning and as a sophisticated sandwich-and-salad emporium after 11am. Breakfast sees a variety of coffees, teas, pastries and—attention New Yorkers!—bagels with lox and cream cheese. Lunch and afternoon see a variety of salads and panini sandwiches. Sweet teeth are drawn to the ice-cream bar, and laptop owners can surf the Web wirelessly here. Out-of-town newspapers are sold; you can linger over them at tables out on the patio.

4337 Irvington Rd., Irvington. ✆ **804/438-9356.** Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $4–$8; sandwiches and salads $6.50–$9. MC, V. Summer Mon–Thurs 7:30am–5pm, Fri–Sat 7:30am–7:30pm, Sun 7:30am–3pm; off season Mon–Thurs 7:30am–3pm, Fri–Sat 7:30am–5pm, Sun 7:30am–noon.

Nate's Trick Dog Cafe AMERICAN This casual bistro is named for a sooty statue of a little black dog that survived the Great Irvington Fire of 1917. A local man gave the statue to his son, telling him it was a "trick dog" because he didn't need to be fed. The dog now resides here, where you pet it for good luck. You might need it, since the restaurant closed and reopened under a new owner since my last visit.

4357 Irvington Rd. (Va. 200), Irvington. ✆ **804/438-1055.** Reservations recommended. Main courses $15–$28. AE, MC, V. Daily 5–9:30pm.

Sandpiper Restaurant AMERICAN This local restaurant has been serving Chesapeake Bay seafood to locals and visitors alike since 1982. Start with chargrilled bacon-wrapped shrimp and proceed to the star attraction, crab cakes made mostly of back fin meat. Other favorites include oysters fried in a delicate batter and a platter of fried or broiled seafood. Chargrilled kabobs of shrimp, scallops, filet mignon cubes, and vegetables offer variety, as does shrimp in a fresh tomato-basil sauce over linguini. Landlubbers can opt for steaks or pork chops.

Rappahannock Dr. (Va. 3), White Stone. ✆ **804/435-6176.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses $17–$27. DISC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 5–9pm; Fri–Sat 5–10pm.

7

Charlottesville

Situated in the rolling foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Charlottesville is one of Virginia's most fascinating places to visit, thanks in large part to its three distinct personalities.

First, it's a quintessential college town, with the University of Virginia predominating everyday life for a large portion of its 45,000 or so residents. UVA is one of the country's finest and most beautiful public universities—a fact most begrudgingly admitted by one who matriculated at that other fine public beauty, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, one of UVA's major rivals on the playing fields.

Second, this vibrant cosmopolitan center is consistently ranked as one of America's best places to live. Its charm, the beauty of the surrounding countryside, and an extraordinary number of facilities for a town this size have attracted a number of rich and famous folk like rock star Dave Matthews, author John Grisham, and former pro football player-turned-broadcaster Howie Long. Indeed, you never know whose famous face you'll recognize on the streets and in the extraordinary number of good restaurants here. Most of the celebrities live on estates out in the surrounding horse country, giving them a high degree of privacy but also quick access to a town that takes them quite in stride.

That's not surprising because Charlottesville has always had more than its share of famous Americans, which brings up its third personality as a center of American history.

It was here that Thomas Jefferson built his famous mountaintop home, Monticello; selected the site for and helped plan the Ash Lawn–Highland home of his presidential buddy, James Monroe; designed his "academical village" at UVA; and died at home 50 years to the day after Congress adopted his Declaration of Independence. "All my wishes end where I hope my days will end," he wrote, "at Monticello."

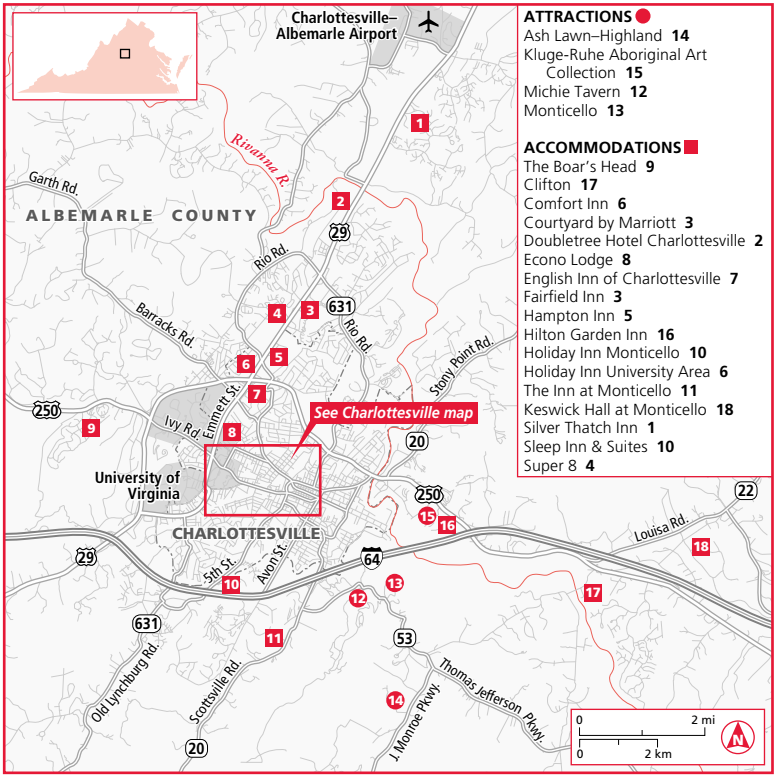
Indeed, the third president's presence is still so much in evidence here that locals call this "Mr. Jefferson's Country."

1 ORIENTATION & GETTING AROUND

VISITOR INFORMATION

For information, contact the **Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau,** P.O. Box 178, Charlottesville, VA 22902 (✆ **877/386-1102** or 434/293-6789; fax 434/295-2176; www.pursuecharlottesville.com). The bureau's Downtown Visitor Center is at 610 E. Market St., on the eastern end of the Downtown Mall. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 5pm. Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Be sure to pick up copies of ***The Charlottesville Guide*** (www.charlottesvilleguide.com), a slick, advertiser-supported booklet containing maps and information about the area's attractions, hotels, restaurants, and shops; ***Charlottesville Arts & Entertainment*** (www.artsmonthly.com), a monthly mini-magazine concentrating on the town's cultural



life; and the town's two free weekly alternative newspapers, ***C-Ville Weekly*** (www.c-ville.com) and ***The Hook*** (www.readthehook.com), both packed with restaurant listings and news about what's happening. ***Bites & Sites,*** a *C-Ville* supplement, reviews every restaurant in town.

GETTING THERE

BY CAR Charlottesville is on I-64 from east or west and U.S. 29 from north or south. I-64 connects with I-81 at Staunton and with I-95 at Richmond.

BY PLANE US Airways, Delta, and United fly commuter planes to **Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport (CHO),** 201 Bowen Loop (✆ **434/973-8341;** www.gocho.com), north of town off U.S. 29. Taxis are available, and **Van on the Go** (✆ **877/973-7667** or 434/975-8267; www.vanonthego.com) provides shuttle service into town and shuttle service to the Washington, D.C., airports.

BY TRAIN The **Amtrak** station is at 810 W. Main St. (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com), midway between the Downtown Mall and the university.

CITY LAYOUT

Just as it has three personalities, Charlottesville has three centers of interest to visitors. One is on the southeastern outskirts of town, where Monticello, Ash Lawn–Highland, and Michie Tavern are within 2 miles of each other. The second is the University of Virginia, at the western end of Main Street (which morphs into University Ave. when it reaches the campus). Opposite the campus, between 13th Street and Elliewood Avenue, **The Corner** neighborhood is a typical campus enclave, with student-dominated restaurants, bookstores and clothing stores, and a dearth of parking spaces. The third area, **Historic Downtown Charlottesville,** a mile east of The Corner, is centered on the **Downtown Mall,** an 8-block, pedestrian-only strip at the eastern end of Main Street, between 2nd Street W and 7th Street E.

GETTING AROUND

The easiest way to get between the university and the Downtown Mall is on the **free trolley** operated by the **Charlottesville Transit Service** (**CTS; ✆ 434/970-3649;** www.charlottesville.org/transit). It runs along Main Street every 10 to 15 minutes Monday to Saturday from 6:40am to midnight.

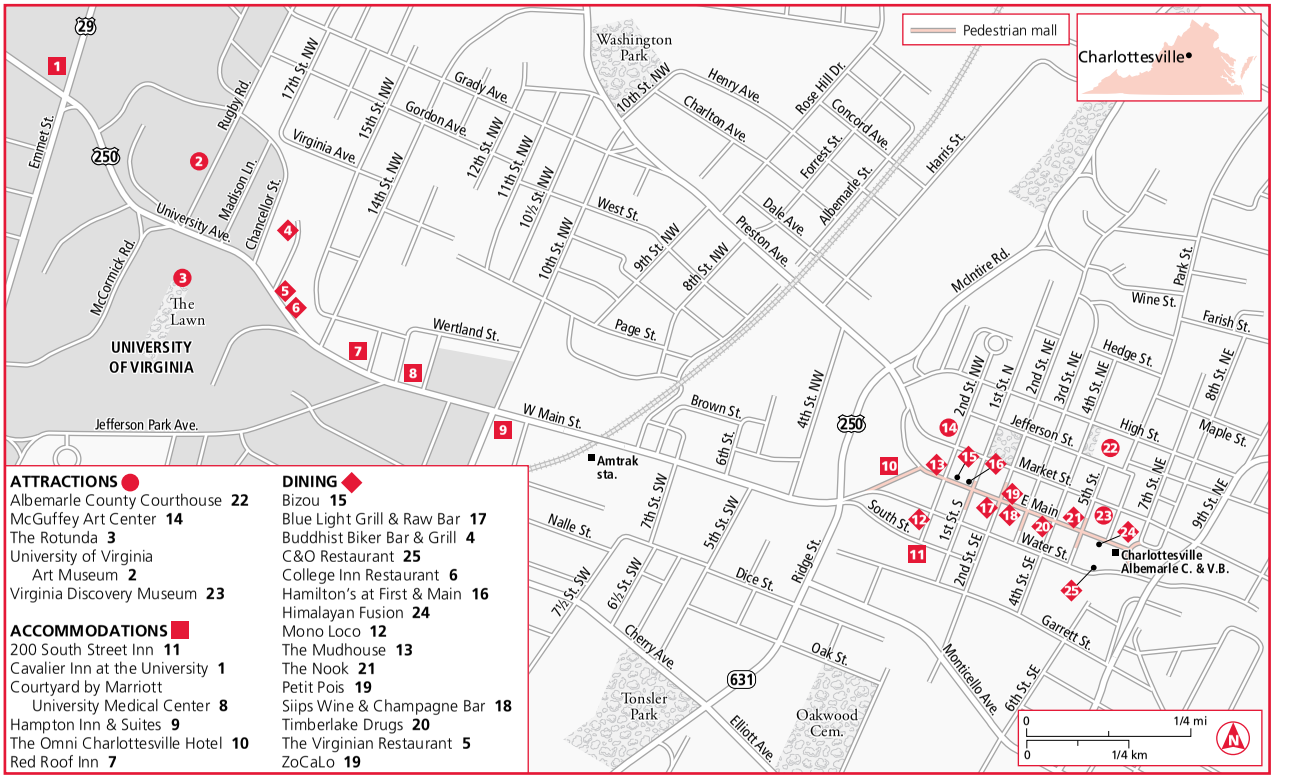
CTS also has bus service throughout the city (but not to Monticello) Monday through Saturday from 6:15am to 6:30pm, Sunday 7:45am to 5:45pm.

PARKING On-street parking is extremely limited. In the Downtown Mall area, you can park free for 2 hours with merchant validation (take your ticket with you and get it stamped) in the garages on Market Street between 5th and 6th streets NE and on Water Street between 2nd and 4th streets SE. The university's visitor parking garage is on the western side of the campus, on Emmet Street (U.S. 29 Business) a block south of University Avenue (which is the continuation of W. Main St.). On the eastern side of campus, two public garages are located opposite the University Hospital on Lee Street, off Jefferson Park Avenue. The Corner has public parking on Elliewood Avenue at 14th Street.

2 WHERE TO STAY

The most convenient chain hotels to Monticello, Ash Lawn–Highland, and Michie Tavern are the **Holiday Inn Monticello** (✆ **800/465-4329** or 434/977-5100), a full-service hotel with restaurant and bar, and a **Sleep Inn & Suites** (✆ **800/424-6423** or 434/244-9969). Both are on 5th Street Extended just north of I-64. The **Hilton Garden Inn,** on U.S. 250 north of I-64 (✆ **877/STAY-HGI** [782-9444] or 434/979-4442), is a recent addition to Charlottesville's hotel inventory.

The traffic-signal encrusted commercial strip along U.S. 29 north of the U.S. 250 bypass (Charlottesville's major suburban growth area) is lined with an ever-expanding multitude of shopping centers, chain motels, and restaurants. Here you will find the **Doubletree Hotel Charlottesville** (✆ 800/494-7596 or 434/973-2121), the area's best-equipped suburban hotel, and a comfortable **Courtyard by Marriott** (✆ 800/321-2211 or 434/973-7100), which abuts the Fashion Square Mall. Others along U.S. 29 north include **Comfort Inn** (✆ 800/228-5150 or 434/293-6188), **Econo Lodge North** (✆ 800/553-2666 or 434/295-3185), **Hampton Inn** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 434/978-7888), **Holiday Inn University Area** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 434/293-9111), **Fairfield Inn by Marriott** (✆ 800/228-2800 or 434/964-9411), and **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 434/973-0888).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Tips Avoiding the Crowds in Charlottesville

The two visitor centers operated by the **Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau** make same-day, discounted lodging reservations (see "Orientation & Getting Around," above). It's a good way to save, provided you are willing to take the risk of not having a room reserved in advance. Do not try this during University of Virginia events such as football games, graduation, and parents' weekends, when the town is packed and all accommodations are packed. You may not want to be in Charlottesville then—or make your reservations as far in advance as possible. You will also pay premium rates at these times. Check the schedules at www.virginia.edu.

EXPENSIVE

The Boar's Head ★★ Standing beside a picturesque lake and named for the traditional symbol of hospitality in Shakespeare's England, this university-owned property is one of the better all-around resorts in Virginia. The focal point is a 19th-century gristmill that was dismantled and brought here in the early 1960s. The place is loaded with antiques and art, and its plank flooring and huge old ceiling beams give ancient charm to the **Old Mill Room,** the resort's signature restaurant offering fine dining accompanied by an excellent selection of Virginia wines. The adjoining Bistro 1834 pub offers lighter fare and outdoor seating by the lake. The innlike guest rooms upstairs in the mill are charming and romantic, but if you want more space and a balcony, opt for a unit in one of the other lakeside structures, especially the Hunt Club building between the old mill and the resort's full-service spa. Guest quarters throughout are furnished with Colonial reproductions. Some units in the Ednam Hall, which does not face the lake, have kitchenettes. In addition to the spa and the resort's own tennis courts, guests can play at the adjacent Boar's Head Sports Club (26 tennis courts, 2 pools, state-of-the-art fitness center) and the university's nearby Birdwood Golf Course. The Boar's Head also is one of the best places in the region to take off on a hot-air balloon ride.

200 Ednam Dr. (P.O. Box 5307), Charlottesville, VA 22905. ✆ **800/476-1988** or 434/296-2181. Fax 434/972-6019. www.boarsheadinn.com. 171 units. $161–$325 double; $335–$575 suite. Resort fee $8 per unit. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. U.S. 250 1 mile west of U.S. 29/250 bypass. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; bikes; concierge; golf course; health club; Jacuzzi; 4 outdoor pools (1 heated); room service; spa; 6 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen (11 units), Wi-Fi (some units; all are wired).

MODERATE

Courtyard by Marriott University/Medical Center ★ Sitting at the eastern edge of the university, this modern yet Colonial-style brick building fits in with the ancient campus structures nearby. Like all Courtyards, it's designed with business travelers in mind, offering well-equipped rooms and a restaurant serving a breakfast buffet daily, dinner and libation Monday to Friday. For the romantically inclined, six units have two-person Jacuzzi tubs almost surrounded by floor-to-ceiling mirrors.

1201 W. Main St., Charlottesville, VA 22903. ✆ **800/321-2211** or 434/977-1700. Fax 434/977-2600. www.courtyard.com. 137 units. $119–$199 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

English Inn of Charlottesville Value Tudor–style buildings and English decor make this Charlottesville's most charming hotel. North of the university at the intersection of

U.S. 29 and U.S. 250, it's a modern hotel, but the wood-paneled lobby with fireplace and Oriental rugs gives it the ambience of an English country inn. Rooms are variously decorated, many with Queen Anne–style reproduction pieces. The "king suites" have bedrooms and sitting areas with sofas. In their own building enclosing a private courtyard, newer extended stay suites offer kitchens and either one or two bedrooms. You can do laps in Charlottesville's largest indoor pool.

2000 Morton Dr. (at Emmet St.), Charlottesville, VA 22903. ✆ **800/786-5400** or 434/971-9900. Fax 434/977-8008. www.englishinncharlottesville.com. 106 units. $90–$200 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. Follow U.S. 29 north to just south of the U.S. 250 bypass. **Amenities:** Free airport transfers; health club; indoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen (in suites), Wi-Fi.

Hampton Inn & Suites Value Also well-situated, this five-story brick structure is 3 blocks east of the Courtyard—far enough away from The Corner to avoid the crowds. The city's free trolley runs along Main Street, so it's easy to get from here to the campus and the Downtown Mall without having to drive. Murals of Monticello, the Rotunda, and other local scenes overlook a gas fireplace in the center of an elegant, two-story lobby. Eight of the suites here also have gas fireplaces, and all have separate bedrooms with TVs, and kitchens with microwave ovens and dishwashers. The medium-size rooms also come well equipped. Guests are treated to an extensive breakfast in a room off the lobby.

900 W. Main St., Charlottesville, VA 22903. ✆ **800/426-7866** or 434/923-8600. Fax 434/923-8601. www.hamptonsuites.com. 100 units. $139–$219 double; $189–$229 suite. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Health club. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen (some units), Wi-Fi.

The Omni Charlottesville Hotel ★★ You can't miss this seven-story, brick-and-glass structure with a soaring atrium lobby since its triangular shape towers above the western end of the Downtown Mall. The location is ideal because you can walk to the mall's many restaurants and shops and ride the free trolley to the university. The rooms are medium-size, and those on the upper floors have views over the city. At the street level, a fountain bubbles amid a tropical forest in the atrium lobby. The Omni has extensive meeting space and draws more conventions and groups than most hotels here. Your small pet can share your room for a fee.

235 W. Main St. (at McIntire St.), Charlottesville, VA 22901. ✆ **800/843-6664** or 434/971-5500. Fax 434/979-4456. www.omnihotels.com. 208 units. $129–$269 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $8. From I-64, take Exit 120 and follow Fifth Ridge St. (C.R. 631) north to McIntire St.; hotel is on the right. Small pets accepted ($50 fee). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; Jacuzzi; 2 pools (indoor & outdoor); room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hrs.).

INEXPENSIVE

Cavalier Inn at the University Half a mile west of the Rotunda, this five-story, glass-and-steel motel is close to Scott Stadium, University Hall, and John Paul Jones Arena, the major sports venues. Although it has been around for more than 3 decades, it is maintained in top condition by the university, which owns it. The spacious motel-style rooms are entered through external walkways bordered by wrought-iron railings, which means a dearth of privacy unless you keep the drapes drawn across the floor-to-ceiling windows. A continental breakfast is served in a charming room off the lobby that doubles as the guest lounge. During summer you can cool off in a small outdoor pool. The hotel provides complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport and the Amtrak and bus stations.

105 Emmet St. (at W. Main St.; P.O. Box 5647), Charlottesville, VA 22905. ✆ **888/882-2129** or 434/296-8111. Fax 434/296-3523. www.cavalierinn.com. 118 units. $79–$119 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From U.S. 29 bypass, go east on Ivy Rd. (U.S. 250 Business) 1 mile to hotel on the left. **Amenities:** Free airport transfers; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Red Roof Inn In the middle of the action and a cut above most other members of this inexpensive chain, this clean, comfortable seven-story hotel is on the eastern edge of The Corner and across West Main Street from the university. Interior hallways lead to medium-size guest rooms, which contain cherrywood furniture. Despite being a bit small, the bathrooms have surprisingly ample vanity space. The Corner's many food outlets are steps away.

1309 W. Main St. (at 13th St.), Charlottesville, VA 22903. ✆ **800/843-7663** or 434/295-4333. Fax 434/295-2021. 135 units. $79–$195 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free in some units, $8 per day in others).

BED & BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATIONS

Guesthouses Reservation Service, Inc., P.O. Box 5737, Charlottesville, VA 22905 (✆ **434/979-7264;** www.va-guesthouses.com), handles bed-and-breakfast accommodations in elegant homes and private cottages. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm.

A block north of the Downtown Mall, the elegant **200 South Street Inn,** 200 South St. (✆ **800/964-7008** or 434/979-0200; www.southstreetinn.com), occupies a stately 1856 house that has seen previous duty as private residence, girls finishing school, and brothel. More rooms are in an 1890-vintage house next door.

The Inn at Monticello ★ The most convenient accommodations to Monticello, Ash Lawn–Highland, and Michie Tavern, this beautiful two-story stucco country house sits on 5 acres well back from Va. 20. The manicured lawn is ornamented in spring with blooming dogwood trees and azaleas. Boxwoods, tall shade and evergreen trees, shrubs, and a bubbling brook provide a lovely setting. You enter via the front porch into a sitting room with two fireplaces and a handsome collection of antiques. Guest rooms are individually decorated and have such special features as a working fireplace, private porch, or four-poster canopy bed—but no phones. Relax outdoors on the hammock or on the front veranda lined with wicker rockers. Afternoon snacks are accompanied by Virginia wine.

1188 Scottsville Rd. (Va. 20), Charlottesville, VA 22902. ✆ **877/735-2982** or 434/979-3593. Fax 434/296-1344. www.innatmonticello.com. 5 units. $160–$245 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Access to nearby health club. *In room:* A/C, no phone, Wi-Fi.

NEARBY COUNTRY INNS

Clifton ★★★ You'll think you've arrived at Tara from *Gone With the Wind* when you see this stately manse, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Thomas Mann Randolph, husband of Thomas Jefferson's daughter, Martha, built it in 1799, originally as a trading post. Although neither as physically grand nor as well equipped as Keswick Hall at Monticello (see below), this is a more intimate retreat.

The **Restaurant at Clifton** is among the best dining options in the Charlottesville area, providing an international a la carte menu that lives up to the inn's Relais & Château affiliation. Groups can reserve the big table for 24 in the excellent basement wine cellar.

Guest rooms and suites upstairs in the mansion are comfortable, but for more privacy and charm, opt for the estate's whitewashed stables, old carriage house, and Randolph's

Fun Facts Hog Heaven

Despite a name that conjures up images of barbecue in these parts, vegetarians and vegans will find their own hog heaven 23 miles south of Charlottesville at **The White Pig Bed and Breakfast at Briar Creek Farm,** 5120 Irish Rd., Schuyler, VA 22696 (✆ **434/831-1416;** www.thewhitepig.com). Norman, the owners' pet white pig, will never be over the coals; breakfasts and Saturday dinners at this retreat are strictly vegan.

law office, which have been converted into romantic outposts. The split-level carriage house sports a grand piano and Jacuzzi, while the honeymoon cottage has a glass-walled bathroom.

1296 Clifton Inn Dr., Charlottesville, VA 22911. ✆ **888/971-1800** or 434/971-1800. Fax 434/971-7098. www.cliftoninn.net. 14 units. $195–$255 double; $195–$555 suite. Rates include full breakfast and afternoon tea. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Minimum 2-night stay weekends. From Charlottesville take U.S. 250 east 5 miles, turn right on N. Milton Rd. (C.R. 729), go 1/4 mile to Clifton Inn Dr. on left. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service; tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

Keswick Hall at Monticello ★★★ Although it's now owned and operated by Orient Express Hotels, this super-luxury estate was the creation of Sir Bernard Ashley, widower of famed designer Laura Ashley. Many of the 1912 vintage Italianate Crawford villa's rooms and suites have fireplaces, claw-foot tubs, and views over a golf course redesigned by Arnold Palmer, but don't expect to find these in the 14 least expensive "house rooms." All guests can roam around the vast public rooms on the main level, including a lounge with fireplace. English afternoon tea is free to guests. **Fossett's** restaurant, also espying the links, offers a mix of fine cuisine and excellent service plus special wine tastings of the estate's own vintage. Guests can also have lunch or dinner at the bistro in the adjoining Keswick Club, a private country club whose spa, fitness center, and indoor and outdoor pools are available. All these facilities make Keswick Hall more of a resort than the nearby Clifton (see above).

701 Country Club Dr., Keswick, VA 22947. ✆ **800/274-5391** or 434/979-3440. Fax 434/977-4171. www.keswick.com. 48 units. $295–$550 double; $485–$600 suite. Rates include afternoon tea. AE, DC, MC, V. From Charlottesville take U.S. 250 or I-64 east to Shadwell (Exit 124); then Va. 22 east and follow signs to Keswick. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; golf course; health club; Jacuzzi; 4 pools (1 indoor); room service; sauna; spa; 5 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Silver Thatch Inn ★ Occupying a rambling white-clapboard Colonial-style house, a section of which dates to Revolutionary days, this charming hostelry is located on a quiet road set on nicely landscaped grounds about 8 miles north of town. Attractively decorated with authentic 18th-century pieces, the original part of the building now serves as a cozy common room, where guests are invited for afternoon refreshments. The 1812 part of the house is one of the dining rooms of the **Silver Thatch Restaurant and Pub,** one of the area's most romantic dining venues. Three guest rooms are upstairs in the main house, while four others are in the President's Cottage. Named for Virginia's seven pre-20th-century presidents, all are lovely, with down comforters on four-poster canopied beds, antique pine dressers, and carved walnut-and-mahogany armoires. Several rooms have working fireplaces. Telephones and TVs are available in the common areas.

3001 Hollymead Dr., Charlottesville, VA 22911. ✆ **800/261-0720** or 434/978-4686. Fax 434/973-6156. www.silverthatch.com. 7 units. $155–$190 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Take U.S. 29 about 8 miles north of town, turn right at traffic signal onto Hollymead Dr. to inn on the right. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, no phone, Wi-Fi.

A MOUNTAIN GETAWAY

Wintergreen Resort About 43 miles southwest of Charlottesville, this 11,000-acre recreational real estate development offers year-round vacation activities in a Blue Ridge Mountain setting. The big draws include skiing, golf (the short, narrow fairways of Devils Knob course follow the cool summit of a 4,000-ft.-high mountain), horseback riding, mountain biking, swimming in the lake, canoeing, and an adventure center with rock climbing, skateboarding, wintertime snow tubing, and other activities. Wintergreen also has a Nature Foundation that offers guided hikes, seminars, and camps for children. There's music in the cool air, too, as **Wintergreen Performing Arts, Inc.** (✆ **434/325-8292;** www.wintergreenperformingarts.org) turns a ski slope into an amphitheater for the Wintergreen Summer Music Festival in July and weekend concerts throughout the summer.

The resort's focal point is the tastefully lodgelike Inn, which has a huge gristmill wheel occupying the two-story registration area. Most accommodations are in small enclaves scattered throughout the property, but there are also three- to seven-bedroom homes, one- to four-bedroom condos, and studios and lodge rooms. Since the homes and condos are privately owned, furnishings are highly individual, ranging from country quaint to sleek and sophisticated. Each condo is appointed with a modern kitchen, living area, bathroom for each bedroom, and balcony or patio (the mountain views are superb); most have working fireplaces.

P.O. Box 706, Wintergreen, VA 22958. ✆ **800/266-2444** or 434/325-2200. Fax 434/325-8004. www.wintergreenresort.com. 300 units. $129–$199 double; $149–$855 condos and homes. Recreational packages available. AE, DISC, MC, V. Take I-64 west to Exit 107 and follow U.S. 250 west; turn left onto C.R. 151 south, and then right on C.R. 644 for 4½ miles to resort. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; bikes; children's center or programs; concierge (winter only); 3 golf courses; health club; Jacuzzi; 5 pools (1 indoor); room service; sauna; 24 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen, Wi-Fi.

3 WHERE TO DINE

Charlottesville has more than 300 restaurants—so many that locals brag they have more restaurants per capita than any city in America. For a complete rundown, pick up a copy of ***Bites & Sites,*** a free restaurant guide supplement to ***C-Ville Weekly*** (www.c-ville.com), at the visitor center (see "Visitor Information," earlier in this chapter). There are also lists and reviews in ***The Hook*** (www.readthehook.com), the other free newspaper found in boxes all over town.

This area's finest and most romantic (and most expensive) dining is in the Old Mill Room at The Boar's Head and at Clifton, Keswick Hall at Monticello, and the Silver Thatch Inn (see "Where to Stay," above); reservations are strongly recommended at all.

The Corner neighborhood opposite the university has several restaurants catering to the college crowd. Most are on University Avenue, including **The Virginian Restaurant** (✆ **434/984-4667;** www.virginianrestaurant.com), which has been serving traditional fare since 1923, and the Greek-Italian **College Inn Restaurant** (✆ **434/977-2710;** www.thecollegeinn.com), which has been around since 1950. More are on Elliewood

Avenue, a block-long, alleylike street off University Avenue, including the inexpensive **Buddhist Biker Bar & Grill** (✆ **434/971-9181**).

I seldom go farther in search of a good meal than along East Main Street on the Downtown Mall, which has restaurants to suit every taste and pocketbook. All of them post their menus outside, so you can pick and choose depending on your own tastes.

For a caffeine fix, I drop into **The Mudhouse,** 213 W. Main St. (✆ **434/984-6833**), a quintessential college-town coffeehouse. You'll find me having a more substantial breakfast at **The Nook,** 415 E. Main St. (✆ **434/295-6665**), which has been serving inexpensive meals for more than half a century. Also still going strong is the soda fountain in **Timberlake Drugs,** 322 E. Main St. (✆ **434/295-9155**), which has been in business since 1890.

MODERATE

Blue Light Grill & Raw Bar ★ AMERICAN You'll get the freshest seafood in town at this storefront restaurant on the Downtown Mall. Atop a mound of ice behind the long bar to the left as you enter, oysters from Chincoteague; Long Island, New York; and the Pacific Northwest wait to be consumed raw or steamed on the half shell. If they won't do for an appetizer, order a tempura-style soft shell crab. Among the mains could be grilled swordfish with country ham and a smoked tomato relish, salmon with cheese grits, and seared sea scallops with roasted vegetables in a basil pesto. The daily specials have the freshest catch.

120 E. Main St. ✆ **434/295-1223.** www.bluelightgrill.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses $20–$25. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm.

C&O Restaurant ★★★ INTERNATIONAL A block south of the Downtown Mall's eastern end, this unprepossessing brick front with an ancient Pepsi-Cola sign might make you think twice, but don't be deterred, for this unusual setting has been home to acclaimed fare for more than 3 decades. From all appearances, the creaky floors in this charming old building were around in Mr. Jefferson's day. Changing monthly, the menu is basically country French but ranges across the globe—from Thailand to New Mexico and Louisiana—for additional inspiration. Many patrons stop in the downstairs Bistro, a rustic setting of exposed brick and rough-hewn barn wood, but in warm weather I prefer the outdoor patio or the covered garden. The C&O's list has won a *Wine Spectator* award for excellence. This is the best spot in town for a midnight snack, served daily until 1am.

515 E. Water St. ✆ **434/971-7044.** Reservations recommended (not accepted in downstairs Bistro or patio). Main courses $20–$32. AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm. Closed 1st week in Jan, July 4th, and Dec 25.

Hamilton's at First & Main ★★ AMERICAN Marble-top tables, crisp linen napkins, and fresh flowers let you know you're in for some high style at this urbane bistro in the Downtown Mall. It's the kind of place you'd take a special date, but not necessarily propose marriage. The menu changes frequently, but if offered, the pan-roasted crab cakes on jasmine rice and red-pepper purée will demonstrate the chef's prowess. There is usually a dish or two with Asian influences, such as an Indian masala-style rice stir-fry with chicken and shrimp and a tomato–coconut milk sauce. The daily vegetarian blue-plate special is very tasty, too.

101 W. Main St. ✆ **434/295-6649.** www.hamiltonsrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $23–$29. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–9pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–10pm.

Petit Pois ★ (Finds) FRENCH/MEDITERREAN Next door to ZoCaLo (see below), this bistro serves very good European-influenced fare. My dinner starter of marinated and grilled shrimp served with white beans simmered with tomatoes was both excellent and filling (it appears as a lunchtime main course). I went on to a vegetarian risotto with perfectly sautéed baby asparagus. The outdoor tables here are covered by large umbrellas.

201 E. Main St. ✆ **434/979-7947.** Reservations accepted. Main courses $17–$23. MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–2pm and 5:30–9pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–2pm and 5:30–10pm; Sun 11am–2pm and 5:30–9pm.

ZoCaLo ★★ LATIN AMERICAN You may see national celebrities among the local foodies dining at this high-energy bistro. The chef-owners draw their culinary inspiration from Latin America, offering the likes of a super-tender pork loin rubbed in Latino spices and served under a delicious pineapple mole sauce and along with Brazilian-style shredded collards and a sweet-potato cake. Smoking is permitted neither inside nor at the substantial outdoor seating until the kitchen stops serving dinner.

201 E. Main St. ✆ **434/977-4944.** www.zocalo-restaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $18–$26. AE, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm; Sun 10:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm.

INEXPENSIVE

Bizou ★ (Value) AMERICAN Don't be turned off by the greasy-spoon appearance of this narrow restaurant, whose front counter reveals a former incarnation as a diner. The tables and booths in the cramped rear dining area still have the ambience of an unpretentious small town restaurant. On the other hand, the food here is consistently good and affordably priced, especially the "classic fare" such as meatloaf, roasted chicken, and vegetable burritos. I opted for a delicious "new fare" salad of yellow beets, green apples, and toasted pine nuts followed by corn meal–breaded catfish with a jambalaya risotto. The top dessert is grilled banana bread with vanilla ice cream.

119 E. Main St. ✆ **434/977-1818.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses $13–$24. DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm and 5–9pm; Sun 5–9pm.

Himalayan Fusion ★ NEPALESE/TIBETAN/VEGAN Operated by a family of émigrés from Nepal, this casual bistro serves a mix of spicy cuisines from the Himalayans. Some dishes are familiar Indian curries, but I especially enjoyed those from Nepal, in which the ginger, coriander, and garlic flavors were strong enough not to be overwhelmed by curry. The Tibetan-style steamed *momo* dumplings were especially good. Vegetarians and vegans will do well here.

520 E. Main St. ✆ **434/293-3120.** Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses $8–$18. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon and Wed–Thurs 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–11pm; Sat noon–3pm and 5:30–11pm; Sun noon–3pm and 5:30–10pm.

Mono Loco ★★ (Value) LATIN AMERICAN This lively little bistro—10 tables indoors, a few more outside in warm weather—draws its inspiration from Latin America. Only names will be familiar, however, for creativity is on the loose here. From the specials list, I ordered a shrimp-and-bacon burrito that turned out to be a huge burrito shell from which sprang an explosion of delightful flavors. For dessert I couldn't resist bananas Castro served with sugared tortilla strips and quickly disappearing vanilla ice cream. The kitchen is tiny, so don't be in a hurry on a busy night.

200 W. Water St. ✆ **434/979-0688.** www.monolocorestaurant.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses $13–$18. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon 5–9pm; Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–10pm; Sun 5–9pm.

Siips Wine & Champagne Bar AMERICAN Supplied by a local art dealer, the paintings on the walls of this sophisticated wine bar are for sale. So are glasses of wine from a very good international list, including a few of the best Virginia vintages. Wines opened the day before and properly stored overnight are discounted 30% off the regular price (50% off on Sun). Most of the menu consists of salads, sandwiches, and other light fare designed to accompany your wine tasting. A few main courses include pizza on focaccia, German bratwurst served with red cabbage, and pan-seared tuna over seaweed salad. The tables out on the Downtown Mall are pet friendly, and 5% of your bill is donated to the local Humane Society.

212 E. Main St. ✆ **434/872-0056.** www.siipswine.com. Reservations not accepted. Most items $8–$12. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 4–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–midnight; Sun 10:30am–9pm.

4 WHAT TO SEE & DO

Monticello, Michie Tavern, and Ash Lawn–Highland sell a **Presidents' Pass,** a discount ticket combining admission to all three. It costs $34 for adults, $18 for children 6 to 11. The attractions validate the tickets when you show up, so there's no time limit on when you must use the pass. See the box "Getting the Most out of Charlottesville," below, for advice on how best to use your time.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Ash Lawn–Highland ★★ James Monroe's friendship with Thomas Jefferson brought him from Fredericksburg (see chapter 6) to Charlottesville, where he purchased 1,000 acres adjacent to Monticello in 1793. With Jefferson's help he built a home he called Highland (later owners added Ash Lawn in 1838 and a two-story addition in 1882). Before Monroe could settle in, Washington named him minister to France and sent him to Paris for 3 years. By the time he returned, he was suffering financial difficulties, and his "cabin castle" remained the modest house we see today. He was so in debt when he left the presidency in 1825 that he was forced to sell Highland. He spent his final years near Leesburg and in New York City. Today the estate is owned and maintained as a working farm by his alma mater, the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg (see chapter 11). A 30-minute house tour will show you many of the family's original furnishings and artifacts.

This is one venue for the annual **Ash Lawn Summer Opera Festival** (✆ **434/293-4500;** www.ashlawnopera.org).

C.R. 795, off Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Va. 53). ✆ **434/293-8000.** www.ashlawnhighland.org. Admission $10 adults, $9 seniors, $5 children 6–11, free for children 5 and younger. Apr–Oct daily 9am–6pm; Nov–Mar daily 11am–5pm. 30-min. house tours depart every 10–15 min. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From Va. 20, follow the directions to Monticello; Ash Lawn–Highland is 2½ miles past Monticello on James Monroe Pkwy. (C.R. 795).

Michie Tavern ca. 1784 ★★ In 1746, Scotsman "Scotch John" Michie (pronounced "Mickey") purchased 1,152 acres of land from Patrick Henry's father, and in 1784, Michie's son, William, built this tavern on a well-traveled stagecoach route at Earlysville, 17 miles northwest of Charlottesville. A wealthy businesswoman, Josephine Henderson, had it moved to its present location and reconstructed in 1927. Included in the 30-minute living-history tours are the **Virginia Wine Museum** and reproductions of the "dependencies"—log kitchen, dairy, smokehouse, icehouse, root cellar, and "necessary" (note the not-so-soft corncobs). The general store has been re-created, along with

Tips Getting the Most out of Charlottesville

Monticello, Ash Lawn–Highland, and Michie Tavern are within 2 miles of each other on Thomas Jefferson Parkway (Va. 53). That's off Va. 20 just south of I-64, on the southeastern outskirts of town. You'll need a full day to fully take them in.

Monticello, Michie Tavern, and Ash Lawn–Highland sell a **Presidents' Pass,** a discount ticket combining admission to all three. It costs $34 for adults, $18 for children 6 to 11. The attractions validate the tickets when you show up, so there's no time limit on when you must use the pass.

You can buy Monticello tickets in advance at www.monticello.org. All tickets have specific house tour times printed on them, which has eliminated the long lines of people waiting to go through the mansion in busy periods. It's a good idea to buy your tickets as early as possible so you'll have the widest choice of tour times. Be sure to arrive at the Monticello visitor center at least 30 minutes early in order to get up to the house on time.

I would spend the morning at Monticello, then head to nearby **Michie Tavern,** where you can tour the tavern and the Virginia Wine Museum, and have lunch (expect a wait on weekends and in Oct). In the afternoon, head for Monroe's **Ash Lawn–Highland,** 2½ miles away, which will take about an hour to see.

If you have time left over, head for the **University of Virginia.** Otherwise, plan to tour the campus and see the town's other sights the next day.

excellent crafts and clothing shops. Behind the store is a gristmill that has operated continuously since 1797.

Plan your visit to Michie Tavern to coincide with lunchtime, when a buffet is served to weary travelers in the Ordinary, a converted log cabin with original hand-hewn walls and beamed ceilings. The fare is typical Southern dishes such as fried chicken, black-eyed peas, and cornbread. They accept American Express, MasterCard, and Visa. During summer you can skip the buffet and order inexpensive barbecue sandwiches, hot dogs, ice cream, and other snacks at the Spring House, an outdoor fast-food stand behind the Ordinary.

683 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Va. 53). ✆ **434/977-1234.** www.michietavern.com. Admission $9 adults, $8 seniors, $4.50 children 6–11, free for children 5 and younger. Buffet meals $18 adults, $11 children 12 to 18, $7.95 children 6 to 11; summer snack bar $4–$7 (most items). Daily 9am–5pm (last tour 4:20pm). Restaurant daily 11:15am–3pm. Snack bar mid-June to Labor Day daily 11am–4:20pm. 30-min. tavern-museum tours during dining room hours Apr–Oct; self-guided tours Nov–Mar. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25. From the visitor center, go south on Va. 20, turn left at Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Va. 683); Michie Tavern is about 1 mile on right.

Monticello ★★★ Pronounced "Mon-ti-*chel*-lo," the home Thomas Jefferson built between 1769 and 1809 is a an architectural masterpiece and one of the most remarkable Colonial homes in the United States. It was the first Virginia plantation manse to sit atop a mountain rather than beside a river. Jefferson rejected the British Georgian architecture that characterized his time in favor of the 16th-century Italian style of Andrea Palladio.

Later, during his 5-year term as minister to France, he was influenced by the homes of nobles at the court of Louis XVI, and after returning home in 1789, he incorporated features of the Parisian buildings he so admired. The museum in the **Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center,** halfway up the mountain near Monticello's African-American graveyard, explains how he built, renovated, and remodeled it over 40 years. The museum is a short course in classical architecture.

You must start at the visitor center, which also has a gift shop (surely stocked with every book in print about Jefferson), an inexpensive cafe, and the **Griffin Discovery Room,** where children can use blocks to build their own mansion and play with a version of the "polygraph" Jefferson used to make copies of his correspondence.

From there you can either walk or take a shuttle bus to the house, which has been restored as closely as possible to its appearance during Jefferson's retirement years. He or his family owned nearly all its furniture and other household objects. The vegetable garden extends to its original 1,000-foot length, and Mulberry Row—where slaves and free artisans lived and labored in light industrial shops, such as a joinery, smokehouse-dairy, blacksmith shop–nailery, and carpenter's shop—has been excavated.

Jefferson's grave is in the family burial ground, which is still in use.

You can tour the grounds on your own but you must take a guided tour to enter the house. See "Getting the Most out of Charlottesville," above, for advice about buying tickets. Optional tours of the plantation and grounds are available all year, and during summer you can send your young ones on 30-minute tours specifically designed for children.

Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Va. 53). ✆ **434/984-9822** for information, 434/984-9844 on weekends, or 434/984-9800 for recorded information. www.monticello.org. Admission $20 adults, $8 children 6–11, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct daily 8am–5pm; Nov–Feb daily 9am–4:30pm. 30-min. house tours run continuously. Closed Dec 25.

Fun Facts The Legacy of Thomas Jefferson

The phrase "Renaissance man" might have been coined to describe Thomas Jefferson. Perhaps our most important founding father, he was a lawyer, architect, scientist, musician, writer, educator, and horticulturist.

After drafting the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson served as governor of Virginia, ambassador to France, secretary of state, and president for two terms, during which he nearly doubled the size of the United States by engineering the Louisiana Purchase from France. He sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their famous exploration of the territory.

Yet despite all his achievements, Jefferson ordered that his gravestone be inscribed: "Here Was Buried Thomas Jefferson/Author Of The Declaration Of American Independence/Of The Statute Of Virginia For Religious Freedom/And Father Of The University Of Virginia."

Jefferson was 83 when he died at Monticello on July 4, 1826, 50 years to the day after his Declaration of Independence was signed at Philadelphia. Ironically, his fellow revolutionary but later heated political enemy John Adams lay on his own deathbed in Massachusetts. Unaware that Jefferson had died earlier, Adams's last words were: "Jefferson survives."

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA ★★★

One of the world's most beautiful college campuses, Jefferson's beloved **University of Virginia** is graced with spacious lawns, serpentine-walled gardens, colonnaded pavilions, and a classical Rotunda inspired by the Pantheon in Rome. Jefferson regarded its creation as one of his three greatest achievements—all the more remarkable since it was started in his 73rd year. He was, in every sense, the university's father, as he conceived it, wrote its charter, raised money for its construction, drew the plans, selected the site, laid the cornerstone in 1817, supervised construction, served as the first rector, selected the faculty, and created the curriculum. His good friends, Monroe and Madison, sat with him on the first board, and Madison succeeded him as rector, serving for 8 years.

The focal point of the university is the **Rotunda** (on University Ave. at Rugby Rd.), restored as Jefferson designed it. Enter on the ground level on the "village side"—that is, the side facing away from University Avenue. A student will be on duty at a desk to give you information, directions, and brochures. If you're up to it, be sure to climb the three stories to Jefferson's magnificent lecture room under the dome on the top floor. The Rotunda is open daily from 9am to 4:45pm except on holidays. Admission is free but donations are suggested.

Some 600 feet of tree-dotted lawn extends from the Rotunda's south portico to what is now Cabell Hall, designed at the turn of the 20th century by Stanford White. Pavilions on either side of the lawn are still used for faculty housing, each of a different architectural style "to serve as specimens for the Architectural lecturer." Behind each are a garden (originally used by faculty members to grow vegetables and keep livestock) and the original student dormitories, used—and greatly coveted—by students today. The room Edgar Allan Poe occupied is furnished as it would have been in 1826 and is open to visitors.

Paralleling the lawn are more rows of student rooms called the Ranges. Equally spaced within each of the Ranges are "hotels," originally used to accommodate student dining. Each hotel represented a different country, and students would have to both eat the food and speak the language of that country. Although a wonderful idea on Jefferson's part, it lasted only a short while as everyone wanted to eat French but not German.

CAMPUS TOURS When school is in session, students lead 1½-hour campus tours Monday through Friday at 11am and 2pm, weekends at 11am. The tours are first-come, first-served, but call ✆ **434/982-3200** to make sure there will be one when you're here. Guided 1-hour historical tours of the Rotunda (✆ **434/924-7969**) take place daily at 10

Fun Facts Go 'Hoos!

The big spectator sports here obviously are the University of Virginia Cavaliers, who play a full schedule of intercollegiate athletics. The UVA teams may officially be the Cavaliers, but everyone calls them the Wahoos—or 'Hoos for short. Although the nickname Wahoo comes from "Wah-hoo-wah," the school's official yell, some wags say it's from the wahoo fish, which allegedly can drink twice its own weight twice a day. And that reportedly comes from UVA's reputation as a hard-drinking party school! Call ✆ **800/542-8821** or go to www.virginiasports.com for information, schedules, and tickets.

Moments Like a Lively Festival

I enjoy strolling along Charlottesville's Downtown Mall during warm weather when buskers make music beside the restaurant tables under the shade trees on Main Street, thus turning this pedestrian-only strip into a lively outdoor festival. I really like it here when entertainment erupts in the Charlottesville Pavilion, on the east end of the mall.

and 11am, and 2, 3, and 4pm, except during the 3 weeks around Christmas (when the University is closed) and in May during graduation. Both tours are free.

Self-guided walking tour brochures are available in the Rotunda and from the university's **Visitor Information Center** (✆ **434/924-0311**), which is located not on campus but in the University Police Headquarters, on Ivy Road (U.S. 250 Business) just east of the U.S. 29/U.S. 250 bypass. The visitor center is open 24 hours a day. See "Getting Around," earlier in this chapter, for parking information.

THE DOWNTOWN MALL

After I've spent a morning seeing the university, I like to have lunch and poke my head into the shops along Charlottesville's **Downtown Mall,** the pedestrian-only section of Main Street between 2nd and 7th streets. Although the strip is the country's oldest pedestrian mall, it lacks historical charm and seems underwhelming during the cold winter months. But the mall changes character completely in warm weather, when restaurant tables line its entire length and it becomes the city's lively focal point. Fountains, park benches, shade trees, a kiosk bar, theaters, and music-making buskers enhance it all. It's especially active when nationally known artists are in concert in the **Charlottesville Pavilion,** on the mall's eastern end (see "Charlottesville After Dark," later in this chapter).

The mall's 120-plus boutiques and art galleries make it the best place in Charlottesville to shop. You'll instinctively know the best stores when you pass them, but don't pass up the **Yves Delorme Outlet,** where you might find French linens at 75% off their regular prices. I usually walk the entire length in one direction just to take it all in, and then come back to specific shops and restaurants that have drawn my attention. The "Historic Downtown Dining, Entertainment and Shopping" brochure available at the visitor center is an invaluable aid. Call ✆ **434/296-8548** for mall events.

MORE ATTRACTIONS IN TOWN

Albemarle County Courthouse The center of village activity in Colonial days, the courthouse in the historic downtown area features a facade and portico dating from the Civil War. There's no tour, but you can glance at Jefferson's will in the County Office Building. It's easy to imagine Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe talking politics under the lawn's huge shade trees.

501 E. Jefferson St. (at 5th St. E). ✆ **434/296-1492.** www.albemarle.org. Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm.

The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection ★ This museum, about 3 miles east of Charlottesville, houses one of the largest public collections of Australian aboriginal art in the world. It includes the gatherings of wealthy American businessman John W. Kluge,

who began collecting in 1988, and of the late Professor Edward L. Ruhe of Kansas University, who began collecting while visiting Australia as a Fulbright Scholar in 1965. Kluge bought Ruhe's collection and archives and later gave it all to the University of Virginia.

400 Worrell Dr. ✆ **434/244-0234.** www.virginia.edu/kluge-ruhe. Free admission. Tues–Sat 9am–4pm; Sun 1–5pm. 40-min. guided tour Sat 10:30am. Take U.S. 250 east to Pantops; take a right at the stoplight on Worrell Dr.; follow the driveway on the right to the white house at the top of the hill.

McGuffey Art Center Local artists and craftspeople work in their studios in this early-20th-century school building a block north of the Downtown Mall. Art is also exhibited and for sale in the center's three galleries. Shows change monthly.

201 2nd St. NW. ✆ **434/295-7973.** www.mcguffeyartcenter.com. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 1–5pm.

University of Virginia Art Museum This nationally accredited museum has permanent exhibits of American and European painting, sculpture, decorative art, and photography from the 15th to 21st centuries, ancient Mediterranean pieces, and Asian art. A highlight is its "Age of Thomas Jefferson" collection. The museum has an active temporary exhibit schedule.

Thomas H. Bayly Bldg., 155 Rugby Rd. ✆ **434/924-3592.** www.virginia.edu/artmuseum. Free admission (donations welcome). Tues–Sun noon–5pm.

Virginia Discovery Museum Kids The Virginia Discovery Museum is a place of enchantment, offering numerous hands-on exhibits and programs for children ages 1 through 10. Here, they can ride a miniature carousel and dress up as firefighters, soldiers, police, and other grown-ups. The Showalter Cabin, an authentic structure that once stood on a site in Mt. Crawford, Virginia, is outfitted with the simple furnishings appropriate to an early-19th-century lifestyle. An arts-and-crafts studio, an active beehive, and a changing series of traveling and made-on-site exhibits round out the fun.

524 E. Main St. ✆ **434/977-1025.** www.vadm.org. Admission $4. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Easter Sunday, day before Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Day, and Dec 24–25.

JAMES MADISON'S MONTPELIER ★★★

Set on a 2,700-acre estate, facing the Blue Ridge Mountains 25 miles northeast of Charlottesville, **Montpelier** was home to President James Madison and his equally famous wife, Dolley. Madison was just 26 in 1776 when he ensured that religious freedom would be included in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and his efforts at the federal Constitutional Convention in 1787 earned him the title "Father of the Constitution." Madison became secretary of state under his good friend Thomas Jefferson in 1801 and succeeded Jefferson as president in 1809. He and Dolley fled the White House in the face of advancing British troops during the War of 1812.

Two structures remain here from their time: the manor house and the Ice House Temple (built over a well and used to store ice). William du Pont, Sr., bought the estate in 1901 and enlarged the mansion to 55 rooms (thereby almost engulfing the Madison original) and added barns, staff houses, a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, a train station, a dairy, and greenhouses. His wife created a 2-acre formal garden, and daughter Marion du Pont Scott later built the steeplechase course in front of the mansion and initiated the **Montpelier Hunt Races,** which are still held here on the first Saturday in November.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation now owns the property and is in the process of a meticulous, multiyear restoration, which has stripped away the du Ponts'

Tips Take the Scenic Route to Montpelier

I go between Montpelier and Charlottesville via Va. 20, one of the state's most scenic drives. This 25-mile-long **Presidents Route** more or less follows the same winding road Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and James Madison took when they visited each other. You'll pass near Barboursville Vineyards and Burnley Vineyards on the way (see "On the Wine Trail," below).

additions to the mansion, reducing it to the 22-room brick version the Madisons occupied in 1820s. The house is open to the public during the project. You can see the Constitution Exhibit in the south wing and explore the basement rooms on your own, but upstairs you must take a 30-minute tour explaining the near-archaeological aspects of the restoration.

Meanwhile, the Madison's furnishings and many personal belongings (including a lock of James' hair and a bust of Dolley rendered in 1818 by John William Coffee) are on display in the visitor center's "Treasures of Montpelier" exhibit. The Madisons are buried in the family graveyard.

The visitor center also shows what the house looked like during its du Pont incarnation. There's a snack bar, too, plus special children's programs during summer. Audio tours, included in the price of admission, guide you through the property.

You'll need at least 2 hours to see everything, and you'll do a bit of walking, so wear comfortable shoes. Also call ahead for a schedule of special events, such as the races in November, birthday celebrations for James (Mar 16) and Dolley (May 20), the Montpelier Wine Festival in May, and Constitution Day (Sept 17).

11395 Constitution Hwy. (Va. 20), Montpelier Station. ✆ **540/672-2728.** www.montpelier.org. Admission $14 adults, $7 children 6–14, free for children 5 and younger. Apr–Oct daily 9am–5pm; Nov–Mar daily 9am–4pm. 30-min. house tours every 20 min. (last tour 20-min. before closing). Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25. Take Va. 20 north for 25 miles.

ON THE WINE TRAIL

Thomas Jefferson's dream of producing quality wines in Virginia has come true, for along with the Hunt Country in northern Virginia (see chapter 5), the Charlottesville area today is one of the state's two top winemaking regions. Be sure to pick up a brochure for the **Monticello Wine Trail** (www.monticellowinetrail.org) at one of the visitor centers; it gives information about the 22 nearby wineries including their business hours.

To sample all you want and not risk driving home tipsy, take a full day or afternoon excursion with **Arcady Vineyard Wine Tasting Tours** (✆ **434/872-9475;** www.arcadyvineyard.com). Erika and Chris Goddell, owners of Arcady Vineyard Bed and Breakfast, do all the driving while taking you to and from local vineyards. They do not accept marketing or trades with the wineries, and thus are free to visit the best, not those who pay the most. Their full-day tours cost $129 per person, plus $20 per person for a silver-service picnic lunch. Reservations are required.

Most convenient of the local wineries to visit on your own is **Jefferson Vineyards,** 1353 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Va. 53; ✆ **434/977-3042;** www.jeffersonvineyards.com), between Monticello and Ash Lawn–Highland. Thomas Jefferson and an Italian named Filippo Mazzei planted grapes on this property in 1774. Consider stopping for a taste after your day's sightseeing. From there you can drive south on C.R. 795 to the **Kluge**

Estate Winery and Vineyard (✆ **434/977-3895;** www.klugeestate.com), whose owner, the well-heeled Patricia Kluge, has had success with her sparkling wines. You can browse her **Kluge Estate Farm Shop,** purveying the wines and other Virginia products.

Barboursville Vineyards ★ (✆ **540/832-3824;** www.barboursvillewine.com), on C.R. 177 near the intersection of Va. 20 and Va. 33, was Virginia's first modern winery, having been established in 1976 by the largest family-owned Italian winemaker. Its Italian restaurant is open for lunch Monday to Friday, dinner Friday and Saturday, and you can stay in luxury at The 1804 Inn at Barboursville Vineyards. Also on the estate are the ruins of one of the five houses Thomas Jefferson designed.

Nearer to Charlottesville on C.R. 641 west of Va. 20, **Burnley Vineyards** (✆ **540/832-2828;** www.burnleywines.com) is one of the oldest wineries in the area.

ATTRACTIONS IN THE LYNCHBURG AREA

When Jefferson wanted to get away from it all, he headed south to Poplar Forest, his country retreat near the James River town of Lynchburg, today best known as home to the late Rev. Jerry Falwell and his fundamentalist Liberty University. Lynchburg is a base from which to explore not just Poplar Forest but one of Patrick Henry's plantation homes and the village of Appomattox Court House, where Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant. Also nearby are memorials to the great African-American leader Booker T. Washington and to the D-day invasion during World War II.

Contact the **Lynchburg Convention and Visitors Bureau,** 2015 Memorial Ave., Lynchburg, VA 24501 (✆ **800/723-5821** or 434/845-5966; www.discoverlynchburg.org), for information about the city.

For information about adjacent Bedford County, contact the **Bedford Area Welcome Center,** 816 Burks Hill Rd. (Va. 122), Bedford, VA 24523 (✆ **877/447-3257** or 540/587-5682; www.visitbedford.com). The center is at the entrance to the National D-Day Memorial (see below), on Va. 122 off U.S. 460.

Note that some of these attractions are closer to Roanoke (see chapter 9) than to Charlottesville.

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park ★★★ Here, in the parlor of Wilmer McLean's home 2 miles north of Appomattox, Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, thus effectively ending the bitter Civil War. Today, the 20 or so houses, stores, courthouse, and tavern that made up the village then called Appomattox Court House have been restored by the National Park Service and are essential to any Civil War tour of Virginia. You will need at least 2 hours to visit the restored houses and walk the country lanes in the rural stillness where surrender took place. Start by picking up a map of the park and a self-guided tour booklet at the visitor center in the courthouse. Upstairs, a 15-minute slide presentation and museum exhibits include excerpts from the diaries and letters of Civil War soldiers. Allow at least 2 hours to do that and visit McLean's house, Clover Hill Tavern, Meeks' Store, the Woodson Law Office, the courthouse (totally reconstructed), the jail, and Kelly House. The Confederates laid down their arms and rolled up their battle flags on the now-restored road through the village. There's a full schedule of ranger programs during the summer.

Present-day Appomattox, 2 miles south of the park, has restaurants, budget motels, and bed-and-breakfasts. The **Appomattox Visitor Center** is in the old train station at 214 Main St. (✆ **877/258-4739** or 434/352-8999; www.tourappomattox.com). It's open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Va. 24 (P.O. Box 218), Appomattox. ✆ **434/352-8987.** www.nps.gov/apco. Admission Memorial Day to Labor Day $4 adults, free for children 15 and younger (maximum $10 per vehicle); rest of year $3 adults, free for children 16 and younger (maximum $5 per vehicle). America the Beautiful and National Park Service passes accepted. Daily 8:30am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From Lynchburg, take U.S. 460 east 22 miles to Va. 24 north.

Booker T. Washington National Monument ★ At this memorial to one of America's great African-American leaders, you can conjure up the setting of Booker T. Washington's childhood in reconstructed buildings and demonstrations of farm life and slavery in Civil War–era Virginia. Although Washington called his boyhood home a plantation, the Burroughs farm was small, at 207 acres and never with more than 11 slaves. His mother was the cook, and the cabin where he was born was also the kitchen. His family left the farm in 1865, when he was 9. He determinedly sought an education and walked most of the 500 miles from his home in West Virginia to Hampton Institute, now Hampton University (see "An Easy Excursion to Hampton & Newport News," in chapter 11). He worked his way through school and achieved prominence as an educator, founder of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, author, and advisor to presidents. This monument was established to honor his life and work in 1956, a century after he was born. Begin at the visitor center, which offers a slide show and a map with a self-guided plantation tour and nature walks that wind through the original Burroughs property. Guided tours lasting between 30 and 45 minutes are given daily at 11am and 2pm.

12130 Booker T. Washington Hwy. (Va. 122), Hardy. ✆ **540/721-2094.** www.nps.gov/bowa. Free admission. Daily 9am–5pm. Tours daily 11am and 2pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From Lynchburg, take U.S. 460 west to Va. 122 south; park is 16 miles northeast of Rocky Mount.

National D-Day Memorial On a hilltop with a splendid view of the Peaks of Otter up on the Blue Ridge Parkway (see chapter 9), this memorial to the American soldiers, sailors, and airmen who fought and died in the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, is appropriately here in Bedford, which lost 19 of its young men during the invasion and four more during the Normandy campaign. The town of 3,200 proportionally lost more men on D-Day than any other town in the United States. Stunning in its architectural symbolism, the monument recalls the landing beaches, the cliffs Allied soldiers climbed, and the contributions of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Be sure to pick up a brochure or take a tour (1 hr. on foot, 45 min. by shuttle). I would stop first and see a large relief map of the memorial in the **Bedford Area Welcome Center,** near the entrance.

U.S. 460 at Va. 122, Bedford. ✆ **800/352-DDAY** [3329] or 540/586-3329. www.dday.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 children 6–16, free for children 5 and younger. Walking tours $2, free for children 5 and younger. Riding tours $3 per person. Daily 10am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Red Hill, Patrick Henry National Memorial In failing health, fiery orator Patrick ("Give me liberty or give me death") Henry retired to Red Hill plantation, 35 miles southeast of Lynchburg, in 1794 after serving five terms as governor of Virginia. He died here on June 6, 1799, and is buried in the family graveyard. Begin your tour at the visitor center, where you can see a 15-minute video about Henry and visit the museum with the world's largest assemblage of Henry artifacts and memorabilia. The centerpiece is Peter Rothermel's famous painting *Patrick Henry before the Virginia House of Burgesses,* depicting his "If this be treason, make the most of it" speech against the Stamp Act in 1765. The site contains his actual law office, an accurate reproduction of the main house, the carriage house, and other small buildings. You'll need about an hour here. Henry also lived at Scotchtown (p. 238), north of Richmond.

1250 Red Hill Rd., Brookneal. ✆ **800/514-7463** or 434/376-2044. www.redhill.org. Admission $6 adults, $5 seniors, $2 students. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 9am–4pm, Sun 1–5pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Sat 9am–4pm, Sun 1–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From Lynchburg, take U.S. 501 south to Brookneal, then Va. 40 east, and follow the brown signs.

Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest ★★ In 1806, while he was president, Jefferson himself assisted the masons in laying the foundation for this dwelling on what was then a 4,819-acre plantation and the source of much of his income. He designed the octagonal house to utilize light and airflow to the maximum in as economical a space as possible. It became his escape from the parade of visitors at Monticello, a 3-day carriage ride away. Today, his final architectural masterpiece is again a work in progress, as it is being slowly restored to the way it looked in the early 19th century. Outside, archaeologists try to discover how Jefferson landscaped the gardens. You can see artifacts from the buildings and grounds as they are brought to light and exhibited. Like James Madison's Montpelier (see above), this is a restoration in progress, not a furnished historic home. My prior visit to Monticello's museum helped me understand Jefferson's architectural intentions here.

Va. 661, Forest (6 miles southwest of Lynchburg). ✆ **434/525-1806.** www.poplarforest.org. House tour $10 adults, $9 seniors, $5 youth 12–18, $2 children 6–11, free for children 5 and younger. Apr–Nov Wed–Mon 10am–4pm (last tour begins at 4pm). 40-min. house tours depart on the hour and half-hour. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec–Mar. From Lynchburg, take U.S. 221 south, go south on Va. 811, turn east on Va. 661. From U.S. 460, take Thomas Jefferson Rd. (Va. 811) north, turn east on Va. 661, follow the signs.

5 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

If you can afford it, the best golfing is at the Arnold Palmer–redesigned links at the private Keswick Club, which guests of Keswick Hall at Monticello can pay to play (see "Where to Stay," earlier in this chapter). The University of Virginia's 18-hole **Birdwood Golf Course** (✆ **434/293-GOLF** [4653]), adjacent to The Boar's Head (p. 124), is one of the top 10 collegiate courses in the country. The 18-hole **Meadow Creek Golf Course,** 1400 Pen Park Rd. (✆ **434/977-0615;** www.charlottesville.org), is a short but challenging municipal course. Call the courses to reserve tee times and get directions. Two fine courses—Devils Knob and Stoney Creek—are at Wintergreen Resort, about 43 miles away (see "A Mountain Getaway," earlier in this chapter).

You can go rafting and canoeing on the James River at Scottsville, a quaint, 19th-century town 20 miles south of Charlottesville via Va. 20. The river can run swiftly here—class I or II if it has rained recently, canoeing and tubing conditions if it hasn't. Contact **James River Runners** (✆ **434/286-2338;** www.jamesriver.com), which has been rafting the rapids, taking adventurers on overnight canoe trips, and renting canoes and inner tubes since 1979.

Charlottesville is Virginia's prime venue for hot-air ballooning, with several companies sending their craft soaring over the foothills, depending on the direction of the wind. **Bear Ballooning** (✆ **800/932-0152** or 434/971-1757; www.2comefly.com) takes off from the Boar's Head (p. 124). Others include **Blue Ridge Balloon Company** (✆ **434/589-6213;** www.blueridgeballoon.com) and **Monticello Country Ballooning** (✆ **434/996-9008;** www.virginiahotairballoon.com). Contact them well in advance of coming here.

On the Downtown Mall, the **Charlottesville Ice Park** (✆ **434/817-2400;** www.icepark.com) offers an irregular schedule of ice-skating, skating lessons, and pickup hockey games.

6 CHARLOTTESVILLE AFTER DARK

This well-heeled college town has a lot going on between sunset and the wee hours. For a complete schedule, see *Charlottesville Arts & Entertainment* (www.artsmonthly.com) and the free newspapers *C-Ville Weekly* (www.c-ville.com) and *The Hook* (www.readthehook.com), all available at the visitor centers (see "Visitor Information," earlier).

Two top performing arts centers are on the Downtown Mall. Built in 1931 and restored in 2004 after being dark for 30 years, the **Paramount Theater,** 215 E. Main St. (✆ **434/979-1922;** www.theparamount.net), has showcased the diverse likes of Bill Cosby, Vince Gill, Sir James Gallway, and Arlo Guthrie. At the mall's eastern end, the outdoor but covered **Charlottesville Pavilion** (✆ **877/CPAV-TIX** [272-8849] or 434/817-0220; www.charlottesvillepavilion.com) hosts concerts by nationally known artists as well as community events.

You can watch local theater at **Live Arts,** 123 E. Water St. (✆ **434/977-4177;** www.livearts.org), and **Old Michie Theatre for Youth and Puppetry Arts,** 221 E. Water St. (✆ **434/977-3690;** www.oldmichie.com), both near the Downtown Mall.

The University of Virginia has a constant and ever-changing parade of concerts, plays, lectures, and other events, many at the **Culbreth** and **Helms Theatres** of The University of Virginia, both at 109 Culbreth Rd. (✆ **434/924-3376;** www.virginia.edu/heritagetheatre).

The 14,500-seat **John Paul Jones Arena,** 295 Massie Rd. (✆ **434/243-4960;** www.jonesarena.com), hosts UVA's basketball teams, traveling shows such as *Disney on Ice,* and concerts by leading artists such as Jimmy Buffett, James Taylor, and the hometown Dave Matthews Band.

Like most college towns, Charlottesville sees lesser known bands blasting away, especially on weekends. Even if you're hard of hearing, you can feel the music coming from the student-oriented bars around The Corner. Several Downtown Mall restaurants have live music on weekends, including **Miller's,** 109 W. Main St. (✆ **434/971-8511**), where Dave Matthews tended bar before making it big.

8 The Shenandoah Valley

Those of us who live in or near the Shenandoah Valley are fortunate indeed, for this is one of the most beautiful areas of the eastern United States. All we have to do is take a Sunday drive in the rolling hills dotted with picturesque small towns and well-tended farms with old stone homesteads to appreciate its grandeur.

If you're like me, you'll come here to see the view from the magnificent Shenandoah National Park atop the Blue Ridge Mountains. The park offers spectacular landscapes and a plethora of hiking and riding trails, including a portion of the Maine-to-Georgia Appalachian Trial. The Skyline Drive—one of America's great scenic routes—runs the full length of the park and connects directly with the Blue Ridge Parkway, which continues south to North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains.

Outdoor enthusiasts can ride horses and go tubing, canoeing, or rafting down on the valley floor.

As it is throughout Virginia, history is a major reason to come here. You can see where George Washington carved his initials at Natural Bridge while surveying the valley and examine the Winchester office he used during the French and Indian War.

Union and Confederate armies seesawed up and down the valley during the Civil War, when the North tried to cut off Robert E. Lee's supplies from this "Breadbasket of the Confederacy." Stonewall Jackson left Virginia Military Institute at Lexington to become a great Confederate general. The entire VMI Corps of Cadets fought heroically in the legendary Battle of New Market. After the war, Lee settled in Lexington as president of what is now Washington and Lee University, and both he and Jackson are buried there. As it surely must have been in their time, Lexington is one of the country's most charming college towns.

Woodrow Wilson was born in Staunton in 1856, and a museum adjoining his birthplace pays tribute to this president's peace-loving ideals. Today his hometown is renowned for performing Shakespeare in its exact replica of the Bard's indoor theater.

Across the mountains you can take the waters in the same Warm Springs frequented by Thomas Jefferson and relax at one of the nation's premiere mountain resorts at Hot Springs.

Indeed, this 150-mile long valley and the mountains bordering it have something for everyone.

1 EXPLORING THE VALLEY

VISITOR INFORMATION

For information about the entire region, contact the **Shenandoah Valley Travel Association (SVTA),** 277 W. Old Cross Rd. (P.O. Box 1040), New Market, VA 22844 (✆ **877/847-4878** or 540/740-3132; fax 540/740-3100; www.visitshenandoah.org). The SVTA operates a visitor center in New Market, just off I-81 at U.S. 211 (Exit 264). Open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Tips Snow, Ice & Fog

Major highways in the Shenandoah Valley are kept open during winter, but snow, ice, and fog can close secondary roads, especially the Skyline Drive and other mountain roads during winter. Check with the **Virginia Department of Transportation** (✆ **800/367-7623;** www.virginiadot.org) or the **Weather Channel** (www.weather.com) for present conditions.

GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

The gorgeous scenery of the Shenandoah Valley demands to be seen by private vehicle. At least part of your trip should include the park's spectacular Skyline Drive (see section 2).

The fastest way to and through the region is via I-81, which runs the entire length of the valley floor and has been designated one of America's 10 most scenic interstates. It's also a very busy truck route so drive defensively at all times.

Alongside I-81, the legendary Valley Pike (U.S. 11) is much more peaceful and is like a trip back in time at least 50 years, with its small towns and villages, old-fashioned gas stations, ancient motels, shops, and restaurants.

I-66 enters the valley from Washington, D.C., before ending at Strasburg. I-64 crosses the valley's southern end. Other major east-west highways are Va. 7 and U.S. 50, 211, 33, 250, and 60.

United (✆ **800/241-6522;** www.united.com) has commuter flights to and from **Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport (SHD)** off I-81 between Harrisonburg and Staunton (✆ **540/234-8304;** www.flyshd.com). Avis, Hertz, and Enterprise have rental cars at the airport. Call ✆ **540/234-8304** for airport shuttle service. The nearest major airport is Washington Dulles International, 50 miles east of Front Royal (see "Getting There & Getting Around," in chapter 3). There are also airports in Charlottesville (see chapter 7) and Roanoke (see chapter 9).

Amtrak (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) offers direct service to Staunton.

2 SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK & THE SKYLINE DRIVE ★★★

Running for 105 miles atop the spine of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah National Park is a haven for plants and wildlife. Although long and skinny, the park encompasses some 300 square miles of mountains, forests, waterfalls, and rock formations. It has more than 60 mountain peaks higher than 2,000 feet, with Hawksbill and Stony Man exceeding 4,000 feet. Unfortunately, high humidity and ozone levels frequently create obscuring smog during the summer, so spring and fall are the best seasons to catch the panoramic views from overlooks from the Skyline Drive over the Piedmont to the east and the Shenandoah Valley to the west. The drive gives you access to the park's visitor facilities and to more than 500 miles of hiking and horse trails, including the Appalachian Trail.

Today, over two-fifths of the park is considered wilderness. Animals such as deer, bear, bobcat, and turkey have returned, and sightings of deer and smaller animals are frequent; the park also boasts more than 100 species of trees.

Europeans began settling these slopes and hollows in the early 18th century. The national park came into being 200 years later, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps built the recreational facilities, guard walls, cabins, and many hiking trails. The corps completed the Skyline Drive in 1939.

To me, the park is most interesting and beautiful in the **Central District,** between U.S. 211 at Thornton Gap and U.S. 33 at Swift Run Gap. Unless I'm just passing through, I spend most of my time in this 35-mile strip.

JUST THE FACTS

ACCESS POINTS & ORIENTATION The park and its Skyline Drive have only four entrances. Northernmost is at **Front Royal** on U.S. 340 near the junction of I-81 and I-66, about 1 mile south of Front Royal and 75 miles west of Washington, D.C. The entrances to the Central District are at **Thornton Gap,** 33 miles south of Front Royal on U.S. 211 between Sperryville and Luray, and at **Swift Run Gap,** 68 miles south of Front Royal on U.S. 33 between Standardsville and Elkton. The southern gate is at **Rockfish Gap,** 105 miles south of Front Royal at I-64 and U.S. 250, some 21 miles west of Charlottesville and 18 miles east of Staunton. See the map of the Shenandoah Valley inside the back cover of this book.

The Skyline Drive is marked with **mile posts,** starting at zero at the Front Royal entrance and increasing as you go south, with Rockfish Gap on the southern end at Mile 105.

DISTRICTS The access roads divide the park into three areas: **Northern District,** between Front Royal and U.S. 211 at Thornton Gap (Mile 0 to Mile 31.5); **Central District,** between Thornton Gap and U.S. 33 at Swift Run Gap (Mile 31.5 to Mile 65.7); and **Southern District,** between Swift Run Gap and I-64 at Rockfish Gap (Mile 65.7 to Mile 105).

INFORMATION For free information and expert advice about the park's hiking trails, call or write to Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, 3655 U.S. Hwy. 211 East, Luray, VA 22835 (✆ **540/999-3500;** www.nps.gov/shen). The headquarters is 4 miles west of Thornton Gap and 5 miles east of Luray on U.S. 211. The office is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm.

Aramark Virginia Sky-Line Co., the park's major concessionaire (✆ **888/896-3833;** www.visitshenandoah.com), maintains an informative website on which you can book accommodations at the park's lodges and cabins.

The **Shenandoah National Park Association** (✆ **540/999-3582;** www.snpbooks.org) is the best source of maps, guidebooks, and other publications about the park's cultural and natural history. It has a bookstore at park headquarters, and many of its publications are available at the visitor centers.

For guidebooks and detailed topographic maps of the park's three districts, write or call the **Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC),** 118 Park St., Vienna, VA 22180 (✆ **703/242-0315,** or 242-0965 for a recording of the club's activities; www.patc.net). The PATC helps build and maintain the park's portion of the Appalachian Trail, including trail cabins (see "Hiking & Other Sports," below). The PATC is part of the **Appalachian Trail Conservancy,** P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807 (✆ **304/535-6331;** www.appalachiantrail.org), which covers the entire trail from Maine to Georgia.

The **National Geographic** (www.nationalgeographic.com) publishes a terrific topographic map of the park's hiking trails, showing them all on one weatherproof sheet (map no. 228). One of the best trail guidebooks is the third edition of *Hiking Shenandoah National Park* by Bert and Jane Gildart (Globe Pequot, 2006).

EMERGENCIES In case of emergencies, call the park headquarters (✆ **540/999-3500**).

FEES, REGULATIONS & BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS Entrance permits good for 7 consecutive days are $15 per car, $10 per motorcycle, $8 for each pedestrian or bicyclist from March through November. These fees are $10, $10, and $5, respectively, from December through February. An annual pass ($30) is good for 1 year. Park entrance is free to holders of America the Beautiful—National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes and the National Park Service's Golden Eagle, Golden Access, and Golden Age passports.

The **speed limit** on the Skyline Drive is 35 mph, although given the number of camper vans and rubberneckers creeping along this winding, two-lane road, you'll be lucky to go that fast. This is no place to have a fit of road rage.

Plants and animals are protected; so all hunting is prohibited. Pets must be kept on a leash at all times and are not allowed on some trails. Wood fires are permitted only in fireplaces in developed areas. The Skyline Drive is a great bike route, but neither bicycles nor motor vehicles of any sort are allowed on the hiking trails.

Most of the park is open to backcountry camping. Permits, which are free, are required; get them at the entrance gates, visitor centers, or by mail from park headquarters (see "Information," above). Campers are required to leave no trace of their presence. No permits are necessary for backcountry hiking, but the same "no-trace" rule applies.

VISITOR CENTERS There are two park visitor centers, **Dickey Ridge Visitor Center,** at Mile 4.6 in the Northern District, and **Byrd Visitor Center,** in the Central District at Mile 51 in Big Meadows. Both are open daily 8:30am to 5pm from mid-April through October (to 6pm on weekends from July through Labor Day) and on an intermittent schedule through Thanksgiving weekend in late November. Both provide information, maps of nearby hiking trails, interpretive exhibits, films, slide shows, and nature walks.

Operated by the town of Waynesboro, the **Rockfish Gap Information Center,** on U.S. 211 (at Exit 99 off I-64) at the park's southern gate (✆ **540/943-5187;** www.waynesboro.va.us), has a terrific room-size topographical map of the region (and a life-size statue of Robert E. Lee). Daily hours are 9am to 5pm (closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day).

SEASONS The park's high season is from mid- to late October, when the fall foliage peaks, and weekend traffic on the Skyline Drive can be bumper-to-bumper. Days also tend to be more clear in fall than in summer, when lingering haze can obscure the views. In spring, the green of leafing trees moves up the ridge at the rate of about 100 feet a day. Wildflowers begin to bloom in April, and by late May, the azaleas are brilliant and the dogwood is putting on a show. Nesting birds abound, and the normally modest waterfalls are at their highest during spring, when warm rains melt the highland snows. You'll find the clearest views across the distant mountains during winter, but many facilities are closed then, and snow and ice can shut down the Skyline Drive. Also, parts of the drive are closed at night during Virginia's hunting season from mid-November to early January.

RANGER PROGRAMS The park offers a wide variety of ranger-led activities—nature walks, interpretive programs, cultural and history lectures, and campfire talks. Most are

Tips Be Prepared for Shenandoah National Park

It was a stifling 93°F (34°C) as I drove through Luray one recent summer afternoon. An hour later I arrived at Big Meadows Lodge atop the Blue Ridge—where the temperature was 58°F (14°C). It's always much cooler on the mountaintops than down in the valley, especially at night, so bring suitable clothing, including comfortable walking shoes.

In addition to the magnificent map brochure the ranger will hand you, be sure to get a copy of ***Shenandoah Overlook*** when you enter the park or stop by a visitor center. This tabloid newspaper will be your bible during your visit as it tells you about ranger programs and everything else that's going on during your visit.

With its proximity to the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas, the park is at its busiest on summer and fall weekends and holidays. The fall-foliage season in October is the busiest time, and reservations for October accommodations in or near the park should be made as much as a year in advance. The best time to visit is during the spring and on weekdays from June through October.

Unless you're caught in heavy traffic on fall foliage weekends, you can drive the entire length of the Skyline Drive in about 3 hours without stopping. But why rush? Give yourself at least a day, so lovely are the views from its scenic overlooks. Stop for lunch at a wayside snack bar, lodge, or one of seven official picnic grounds (or any of the overlooks will do for an impromptu picnic). Better yet, get out of your car and take at least a short hike down one of the hollows to a waterfall.

Rather than directing you to one of the park's four entry points, some GPS and Internet mapping systems may inaccurately send you via roads that are closed to the public. If so, you will have to turn around and go back.

Also note that vehicles and trailers more than 12 feet, 8 inches high cannot get through the tunnels south of Thornton Gap.

held at or near Dickey Ridge Visitor Center in the north; Byrd Visitor Center and the Big Meadows and Skyland lodges and campground in the center; and Loft Mountain campground in the south. Schedules are published seasonally in the *Shenandoah Overlook,* available at the entrance gates, visitor centers, and from park headquarters.

SEEING THE HIGHLIGHTS

As I said at the outset of this section, I spend most if not all of my time in the **Central District,** between U.S. 211 at Thornton Gap and U.S. 33 at Swift Run Gap (that is, between Mile 31.5 and Mile 65.7). Although it can be more crowded than the north and south districts, it has the highest mountains, best views, nearly half of the park's 500 miles of hiking trails, and its only stables and overnight accommodations: Big Meadows and Skyland lodges. You can see the views in a day, but give it at least 2 nights if you're doing any hiking, riding, or fishing. Make your reservations for Big Meadows or Skyland

as early as possible (see "Accommodations," below). If you can't get a room in one of them, Luray has the nearest accommodations to the Central District (see section 6).

SCENIC OVERLOOKS My favorite of the 75 designated overlooks in the Central District are **Stony Man Overlook** (Mile 38.6), offering panoramas of Stony Man Cliffs, the valley, and the Alleghenies; **Thoroughfare Mountain Overlook** (Mile 40.5; elevation 3,595 ft.), one of the highest overlooks, with views from Hogback Mountain south to cone-shaped Robertson Mountain and the rocky face of Old Rag Mountain; **Old Rag View Overlook** (Mile 46.5), dominated by Old Rag, sitting by itself in an eastern extremity of the park; and **Franklin Cliffs Overlook** (Mile 49), offering a view from atop the cliffs toward the Shenandoah Valley and Massanutten Mountain. You'll need only 10 minutes or so at each overlook, so plan to pull off at all of these. Assuming you're not smogged in, it'll be 40 minutes well spent.

If you're in the Northern District, pull off at the **Shenandoah Valley Overlook** (Mile 2.8), with views west to the Signal Knob of Massanutten Mountain across the south fork of the river; and **Range View Overlook** (Mile 17.1; elevation 2,800 ft.), providing fine views of the central section of the park, looking south. In the Southern District, **Big Run Overlook** (Mile 81.2) looks down on rocky peaks and the largest watershed in the park.

WATERFALLS Only one waterfall is visible from the Skyline Drive, at Mile 1.4, and it's dry part of the year. On the other hand, 15 other falls are accessible via hiking trails (see below).

HIKING & OTHER SPORTS

HIKING The number-one outdoor activity here is hiking. The park's 112 trails total more than 500 miles, varying in length from short walks to a 101-mile segment of the Appalachian Trail running the entire length of the park. Access to the trails is marked along the Skyline Drive. There are parking lots at the major trail heads, but they fill quickly on weekends.

I strongly recommend that you get maps and trail descriptions before setting out—even before leaving home, if possible. Rangers at park headquarters will tell which trails are best for you, and whether any are closed (see "Just the Facts," above). Free maps of many trails are available at the visitor centers, which also sell the topographic maps, published by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Conference, as well as a one-sheet map of all of the park's walks published by the National Geographic. See "Information," above, for contact information.

An alternative to doing it yourself is to take a guided outdoor adventure organized by **Aramark Virginia Sky-Line Co.** (✆ **888/896-3833;** www.visitshenandoah.com). Led by mountain guides, they include short hikes from the park lodges ($10 per person), 1-day hikes ($89–$178 per person), 2-day excursions ($178 per person), and rock-climbing expeditions ($99 per person). Call or check Aramark's website for schedules and reservations.

At a minimum, take one of the short hikes on trails at Dickey Ridge Visitor Center (Mile 4.6) and the Byrd Visitor Center/Big Meadows (Mile 51). There's an excellent 1.6-mile hike at Stony Man (Mile 41.7).

My gimpy knees don't necessarily agree, but I've concluded that these are the best trails in the Central District:

- **White Oak Canyon** ★★★: Everyone's favorite trail (especially when linked to the Cedar Run Falls trail; see below) begins at Mile 42.6 just south of Skyland and

descends into a steep gorge that is the park's scenic gem. The 7.3-mile trail goes through an area of wild beauty, passing no less than six waterfalls and cascades. The upper reaches to the first falls are relatively easy, but farther down the track can be rough and rocky. This not an easy trail, especially coming back up the 2,160-foot climb, a brutal ascent if you're out of shape. In other words, allow all day.

- **Limberlost Accessible Trail:** At Mile 43 south of Skyland, Limberlost is accessible to visitors in wheelchairs. The easy 1.3-mile loop runs through an old-growth forest of ancient hemlocks. The trail has a 5-foot-wide, hard-packed surface; crosses a 65-foot bridge; and includes a 150-foot boardwalk.
- **Cedar Run Falls:** Several trails begin at Hawksbill Gap (Mile 45.6). A short but steep trail leads 1.7 miles round-trip to the summit of Hawksbill Mountain, the park's highest at 4,050 feet. Another is a moderately difficult 3.5-mile round-trip hike to Cedar Falls and back. You can also connect from Cedar Run to White Oak Canyon, a 7.3-mile loop that will take all day.
- **Dark Hollow Falls** ★: The park's most popular short hike is the 1.4-mile walk to Dark Hollow Falls, the closest cascade to the Skyline Drive. The trail begins at Mile 50.7 near the Byrd Visitor Center. Allow 1¼ hours for the round-trip.
- **Camp Hoover/Mill Prong** ★: Starting at the Milam Gap parking area (Mile 52.8), this 4-mile round-trip hike drops down the Mill Prong to the Rapidan River, where President Herbert Hoover, an avid fisherman, had a camp during his administration (sort of the Camp David of his day). The total climb is 850 feet; allow 4 hours.

Access points to the **Appalachian Trail** are well marked at overlooks on the Skyline Drive. Along the trail, five backcountry shelters for day use each offer only a table, fireplace, pit toilet, and water. The **Potomac Appalachian Trail Club,** 118 Park St. SE, Vienna, VA 22180 (✆ **703/242-0315;** www.patc.net), maintains huts and fully enclosed cabins that can accommodate up to 12 people. Use of the huts is free, but they are intended for long-distance hikers only. Cabins cost $15 to $25 on weekdays, $25 to $70 on weekends. You can reserve cabins by calling PATC Monday to Thursday between 7 and 9pm, Thursday and Friday from noon to 2pm (*only* during these hours). You'll have to submit a signed form (available on PATC's website), so you'll want to start the process as early as possible. PATC's website also shows cabin availabilities.

FISHING The park's streams are short, with limited fishing, so it's hardly worth the time and effort. The park publishes a free recreational fishing brochure and an annual list of streams open for fishing, available at the Big Meadows and Loft Mountain waysides or at sporting-goods stores outside the park.

HORSEBACK RIDING Horses are allowed only on trails marked with yellow, and only via guided expeditions with **Skyland Stables** (✆ **540/999-2211;** www.visitshenandoah.com), on the Skyland Lodge grounds (Mile 41.8). Rides cost $30 per person for 1 hour, $50 for 2½ hours. Pony rides for children are $6 for 15 minutes, $12 for 30 minutes. Children must be 4 feet, 10 inches tall to ride the horses (otherwise they can take a pony ride); an adult must accompany those younger than 12. The stables operate from April through November. Call for reservations at least 1 day in advance. Note that rides can be cancelled during inclement weather.

CAMPING

The park has four campgrounds with tent and trailer sites (but no hookups anywhere). In the middle of the park's Central District, **Big Meadows** (Mile 51.2) has the best

location and sites equipped for campers with disabilities. You can reserve Big Meadows sites in advance by contacting the park service's reservation system (✆ **877/444-6777;** www.recreation.gov). "Walk to" sites cost $20 per night; those with electric hookups are $45 per night. Big Meadows campground is open from early April to the end of October.

Sites at **Mathews Arm** (Mile 22.2), **Lewis Mountain** (Mile 57.5), and **Loft Mountain** (Mile 79.5) are on a first-come, first-served basis at $15 per site per night. They are open from mid-May to late October. Lewis Mountain has only 31 sites and is often full during summer and early fall. Mathews Arm and Loft Mountain have 100 and 200 sites, respectively, and usually only fill on summer and fall weekends.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Situated on the Skyline Drive in the Central District, **Big Meadows Lodge** and **Skyland Lodge** (see below) are the only hotels in the park. They are 9½ miles apart. Lodge reservations should be made well in advance—up to a year ahead for the peak fall season. You can make them through **Aramark Virginia Sky-Line Co.** (✆ **888/896-3833;** www.visitshenandoah.com), the concessionaire that operates both.

Aramark also manages **Lewis Mountain Cabins,** adjacent to the Lewis Mountain Campground at Mile 57.5 in the Central District. These simple abodes range from $30 for a "tent cabin" to $159 for connecting rooms. They all have private bathrooms and are supplied with towels and linens.

Although I prefer the historical ambience of Big Meadows and its convenience to many activities, I'll stay at either if it means I can get a room with a view of the Shenandoah Valley.

The sections that follow later in this chapter describe accommodations in other Shenandoah Valley towns. Luray is nearest to the Central District (see section 6).

Big Meadows Lodge ★ (Value) Built of stone and timber, this rustic building sports a large guest lounge with a roaring fireplace, and its window walls present a spectacular view over the Shenandoah Valley. Accommodations consist of small rooms in the main lodge, cabins, and multi-unit lodges with suites spread out over the premises. Not all units have the valley view, however, so request a "terrace" room in the main lodge building. All units have plain but comfortable furnishings and a private bathroom. "Deluxe" units in the Rapidan and Doubletop buildings have air-conditioning and TVs; otherwise, you won't have such modern amenities. No unit has a phone, but your cellphone should work out on the lodge terrace, and there's wireless Internet access in public areas of the main lodge. The main-lodge dining room features traditional fare such as prime rib, fried chicken, mountain trout, and pastas. Wine, beer, and cocktails are available. Live entertainment keeps the taproom busy during the season. Big Meadows is a major recreational center. Many hiking trails start here, and it's also the site of the Byrd Visitor Center.

P.O. Box 727, Luray, VA 22835 (on Skyline Dr. at Mile 51.2). ✆ **888/896-3833** or 540/999-2221. Fax 540/999-2011. www.visitshenandoah.com. 97 units. $84–$159 double. Highest rates charged weekends and in Oct. AE, DISC, MC, V. Closed Nov to early May. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi. *In room:* A/C (some units), TV (some units), no phone.

Skyland Lodge Skyland was built by naturalist George Freeman Pollock in 1894 as a summer retreat almost atop Stony Man Mountain, the highest point on the Skyline Drive at 3,680 feet. The main building is smaller and less charming than Big Meadow Lodge's. The resort offers rooms in the main lodge as well as in rustic wood-paneled cabins and motel-type accommodations spread out over its 52 acres. Some of the

buildings are dark-brown clapboard, others are fieldstone, and all nestle among the trees. More rooms have wonderful views than at Big Meadow, but again, tell the reservations clerk you want a view. The most panoramic views are from the Shenandoah building, whose air-conditioned rooms have TVs. More rooms also have air-conditioning and TVs here, too. The main building's dining room has a view, and it offers the same fare as at Big Meadows. There's a fully stocked taproom here, too, and the park's only stables are nearby.

P.O. Box 727, Luray, VA 22835 (on Skyline Dr. at Mile 41.7). ✆ **888/896-3833** or 540/999-2211. Fax 540/999-2231. www.visitshenandoah.com. 177 units. $74–$189 double $229–$269 cabin. Highest rates charged weekends and in Oct. Packages available. AE, DISC, MC, V. Closed Nov to early May. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C (some units), TV (some units), no phone.

WHERE TO DINE

In addition to the lodges at Big Meadows and Skyland, there are daytime restaurants and snack bars at Big Meadows (Mile 51), Elkwallow Wayside (Mile 24.1), Panorama-Thornton Gap (Mile 31.5), and Loft Mountain (Mile 79.5).

Picnic areas with tables, fireplaces, water fountains, and restrooms are at Dickey Ridge (Mile 4.6) and Elkwallow (Mile 24.1) in the Northern District; Pinnacles (Mile 36.7), Big Meadows (Mile 51), and Lewis Mountain (Mile 57.5) in the Central District; and South River (Mile 62.8) and Loft Mountain (Mile 79.5) in the Southern District. As the areas are far apart, pick the one nearest to you. Big Meadows is most convenient to park activities.

3 WINCHESTER: A FITTING INTRODUCTION ★

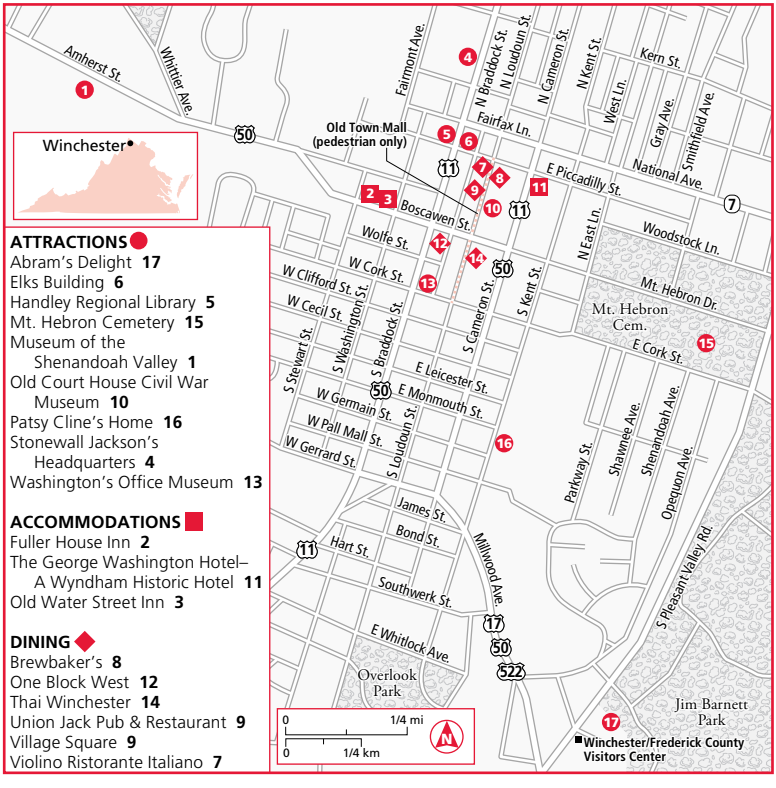
76 miles W of Washington, D.C.; 189 miles NW of Richmond

To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, it is altogether fitting that Winchester comes first in my descriptions of the valley's towns, for its excellent Museum of the Shenandoah Valley provides an altogether fitting introduction to this area. Especially if you're arriving by car from the north or from Washington Dulles International Airport, Winchester should be your first stop.

Winchester is also known as Virginia's "Apple Capital," so-called because of the number of apple orchards in the northern end of the valley. The **Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival** in May is one of the region's most popular events.

What is now Winchester was the site of a Shawnee Indian campground before Pennsylvania Quakers settled here in 1732. George Washington set up shop in town during the French and Indian War 20 years later, and his office is still here. Thanks to its strategic location, Winchester changed hands no fewer than 72 times during the Civil War. Both Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson and Union Gen. Philip Sheridan made their headquarters here at one time or another. It is still a major trading post, as the busy roads leading into and out of Winchester's central Old Town will attest.

Give yourself at least a morning or afternoon here to visit the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, Washington's office, and Stonewall Jackson's headquarters. If you're a country music fan, you can drive by Winchester native Patsy Cline's old haunts and visit her gravesite on the edge of town.



ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Winchester/Frederick County Visitors Center,** 1400 S. Pleasant Valley Rd., Winchester, VA 22601 (✆ **540/542-1326;** fax 540/450-0099; www.visitwinchesterva.com), is open daily from 9am to 5pm (closed New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas). The center shows an 8-minute video about the area and a 5-minute one about the town's role in the Civil War. Take Exit 313 off I-81, go west on U.S. 50, and follow the signs.

GETTING THERE Primary access routes into Winchester include I-81, U.S. 11, U.S. 522, U.S. 50, and Va. 7.

EXPLORING THE TOWN

The heart of Winchester's historic area is the **Old Town Mall,** a 4-block-long pedestrian-only stretch of Loudon Street between Piccadilly and Cork streets. I enjoy strolling the mall, exploring a number of boutiques, and enjoying refreshment at coffeehouses, pastry shops, and several restaurants, some of which offer outdoor seating under shade trees in warm weather (see "Where to Dine," below). Facing the mall, the imposing **Frederick**

Fun Facts "Crazy" for Patsy Cline

Only die-hard country music fans know a Winchester native named Virginia Hensley by her real name, for it was as Patsy Cline that she sang "Walkin' After Midnight" on the nationally televised *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* in the 1950s. The record of that song sold a million copies. Other tunes like "Crazy," "Leavin' on Your Mind," and "Imagine That" will forever be linked to Patsy Cline.

She was only 30 years old when she, Hawkshaw Hawkins, and Cowboy Copas died in a plane crash in March 1963. Her body was brought home and buried in Shenandoah Memorial Park, 3 miles south of town on U.S. 522.

The Winchester/Frederick County Visitors Center (see "Essentials," above) distributes directions to the home at 608 S. Kent St., where she lived with her mother; Gaunt's Drug Store at Loudoun and Gerrard streets, where she worked; Handley High School at 425 Handley Blvd., where she studied; the house at 720 S. Kent St., where she married second husband Charlie Dick; and her grave.

For more information, contact **Celebrating Patsy Cline, Inc.** (✆ **888/608-2726;** www.celebratingpatsycline.org).

County Court House was built in 1840 and is home to the Old Court House Civil War Museum (see below).

While walking between the George Washington and Stonewall Jackson museums (see below), you can't miss the elaborate, Beaux Arts–style **Handley Regional Library,** at the corner of Braddock and Piccadilly streets (✆ **540/662-9041;** www.hrl.lib.state.va.us/handley). Built between 1907 and 1912, it's adorned with a full panoply of Classic Revival statues. A copper-covered dome covers the rotunda, which symbolizes the spine of a book, with the two flanking wings representing its open pages.

Across the street from the library is the white-columned **Elks Building,** headquarters of Union Gen. Philip Sheridan from 1864 to 1865.

Any doubt that this northern end of the valley was fought over during the Civil War will be dispelled at **Mt. Hebron Cemetery,** on Woodstock Lane, east of downtown (✆ **540/662-4868;** www.mthebroncemetery.org). Some 8,000 men killed in the battles are buried here—the Rebels in Stonewall Confederate Cemetery on the south side of the street, the Yankees in the National Cemetery on the north side.

Abram's Delight If you're here between April and October, walk across the lot from the visitor center to this native-limestone residence built beside a lake in 1754 by Quaker Isaac Hollingsworth. The oldest house in Winchester, it served as the town's first Quaker Meeting House. Today, it's fully restored and furnished with 18th- and 19th-century pieces. Guided tours are available.

1340 S. Pleasant Valley Rd. ✆ **540/662-6519.** www.winchesterhistory.org. Admission (without block ticket) $12 family, $5 adults, $4.50 seniors, $2.50 students 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun noon–4pm. 45-min. house tours depart when a guide is available. Closed Nov–Mar.

Museum of the Shenandoah Valley ★★★ A visit to this terrific museum will enrich your tour of the valley by explaining in a nutshell its geography and history. The

museum is on the western side of town at the site of **Glen Burnie,** a lovingly restored, redbrick plantation home standing on the original homestead of Winchester founder James Wood. With sections dating to 1755, Glen Burnie is surrounded by magnificent formal gardens, which shouldn't be missed (many couples have held weddings among the flowers). You should allot at least 2 hours to see the museum, the Glen Burnie manse, and the gardens. Begin in the modern museum building, where a 9-minute video will set the stage for your tour of the complex. A huge topographic map of the entire valley then introduces exhibits tracking the Shenandoah's development from prehistoric times to the present. The museum also houses the remarkable collection of 18th-century furniture and art—including paintings by Rembrandt Peale and Gilbert Stuart—amassed by the late Julian Wood Glass, Jr., the last descendant of James Wood to live at Glen Burnie. Also not to be missed is an extraordinary miniature house collection. You can explore the museum on your own, but you must take a 45-minute tour to enter the Glen Burnie mansion. The museum's tearoom serves soups, salads, and sandwiches from 11am to 4pm.

801 Amherst St. (U.S. 50 W). ✆ **888/556-5799** or 540/662-1473. www.shenandoahmuseum.org. Admission to museum only $8 adults, $6 seniors and students 7–18; museum, Glen Burnie, and gardens $12 adults, $10 seniors and students 7–18; museum and gardens $10 adults, $9 seniors and students 7–18; Glen Burnie and gardens $8 adults, $6 seniors and students 7–18; gardens only $6 adults, $5 seniors and students 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. Garden audio tours $2. Tues–Sun 10am–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Old Court House Civil War Museum Housed in the 1840 Frederick County Court House, this new museum tells of Winchester's role in the Civil War, when it seesawed between Union and Confederate hands. Both sides used the courthouse as a hospital and prison. The museum's most interesting exhibit is upstairs where upwards of 500 prisoners were detained. Many of them carved graffiti into the walls, which you can see through windows.

20 N. Loudon St. (on Old Town Mall). ✆ **540/542-1145.** www.civilwarmuseum.org. Admission $5 per person, free for children 5 and younger. Wed–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm.

Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters ★ Stonewall Jackson used this Victorian home, once owned by a great-grandfather of actress Mary Tyler Moore, as his headquarters in the winter of 1861 to 1862. It's filled with maps, photos, and memorabilia. As you aren't allowed to just walk through, plan on taking a guided tour. Two guides are usually on hand, so there's seldom a wait.

415 N. Braddock St. (btw. Peyton St. and North Ave.). ✆ **540/667-3242.** www.winchesterhistory.org. Admission (without block ticket) $12 family, $5 adults, $4.50 seniors, $2.50 students 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun noon–4pm. 30-min. house tours depart as needed. Closed Nov–Mar.

Tips Saving with a Block Ticket

You can buy a **block ticket** to visit Abram's Delight, Washington's Office Museum, and Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters for $20 for a family, $10 adults, $9 seniors, and $4 students 7 to 18 (free for children 6 and younger). Tickets are available at the museums or at the Winchester/Frederick County Visitors Center (see "Essentials," above).

Washington's Office Museum ★★ George Washington used this small log cabin (since covered with clapboard) as his office in 1755 and 1756 when he was a colonel in the Virginia militia, charged with building a fort to protect the colony's frontier from the French and the Indians. The building itself is the highlight of this charming little museum, whose exhibits explain Washington's career from 1748 to 1758. You can see it all in 30 minutes. Informative staff members are on hand to answer questions and lead guided tours.

32 W. Cork St. (at Braddock St.). ✆ **540/662-4412.** www.winchesterhistory.org. Admission (without block ticket) $12 family, $5 adults, $4.50 seniors, $2.50 students 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun noon–4pm. Closed Nov–Mar.

WHERE TO STAY

If you decide to stay over, the area along Millwood Avenue (U.S. 50) at I-81 (Exit 313), on the southeast side of town, has Winchester's major shopping mall and several chain restaurants and motels. About half the rooms at the **Holiday Inn Historic Gateway** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 540/667-3300) face a courtyard with outdoor pool; the hotel's restaurant is one of the town's more popular lunch spots. Also nearby are the venerable **Best Western Lee-Jackson Motor Inn** (✆ 800/528-1234 or 540/662-4154), a **Fairfield Inn & Suites** (✆ 800/228-2800 or 540/665-8881), a **Wingate by Wyndham** (✆ 800/676-4283), and an inexpensive **Red Roof Inn** (✆ 866/386-4682 or 540/667-5000).

Among the local bed-and-breakfasts, **Fuller House Inn & Carriage House,** 229 W. Boscowen St. (✆ **877/722-3976** or 540/722-3976; www.fullerhouseinn.com), and **Old Water Street Inn,** 217 W. Boscowen St. (✆ **866/665-6770** or 540/665-6777; www.oldwaterstreetinn.com), are in the historic district.

The George Washington Hotel—A Wyndham Historic Hotel ★ In its heyday this 1924-vintage Colonial Revival hotel hosted Lucille Ball and other famous Apple Blossom Festival queens. Betty Crocker held an apple pie baking contest in the ballroom one year. But it fell on hard times, and in the 1970s the George Washington became an assisted living facility. After a complete renovation, it reopened in 2007 and is once again Winchester's premier hotel. Appropriately, a Gilbert Stuart portrait of the first president oversees the lobby, off which the Half Note bar sports a large mural of jazz musicians at work (it hosts the real thing on weekends). Downstairs, the Dancing Goat restaurant offers inventive American fare and outdoor seating in warm weather. You can swim around Grecian columns in the Roman bath–like indoor pool. Of the guest quarters, the "Extended King" models add a sitting area, and some of the 10 suites have fireplaces. Most units have walk-in showers with multiple-heads.

103 Piccadilly St., Winchester, VA 22601. ✆ **800/WYNDHAM** [996-3426] or 540/678-4700. Fax 540/678-1228. www.wyndham.com. 90 units. $119–$139 double; $169–$289 suite. Valet and self-parking $4. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (suites only), hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

A Nearby Country Inn with a French Flavor

L'Auberge Provençale ★★ (Value) Executive chef Alain Borel and his vivacious wife, Celeste, have re-created the look, feel, and cuisine of Provence in this 1750s field-stone farmhouse set on a hilltop with a view of the Blue Ridge. Three of the 11 guest rooms are in this building; antiques and beautiful fabrics complement the Colonial farmhouse's fine features. The remaining cozy accommodations, in an adjoining gray-clapboard addition, are individually decorated with Victorian and European pieces and lovely French Provincial–print fabrics. Exceptional works of fine art adorn the guest

rooms. Alain uses the finest-quality ingredients from his own garden and local farmers to create his superb five-course prix-fixe dinners (reservations required). Even breakfast is a splendid repast, and Alain will provide a gourmet picnic lunch on request. No children younger than 10 need apply for a room here.

U.S. 340 (P.O. Box 190), White Post, VA 22663. ✆ **800/638-1702** or 540/837-1375. Fax 703/837-2004. www.laubergeprovencale.com. 14 units. $155–$325 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. From I-81, take U.S. 50 east 7 miles, turn right on U.S. 340; the inn is 1 mile on the right. No children younger than 10. **Amenities:** Restaurant; Jacuzzi; heated outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, CD player.

WHERE TO DINE

The Old Town Mall along Loudon Street in the heart of downtown has a number of coffeehouses, bakeries, and restaurants, most between Boscawen and Piccadilly streets. Best for fine dining is **Village Square** (✆ **540/667-8961**), which has a sophisticated piano bar and excellent wine shop adjacent. The cuisine is *nouveau americain,* such as a roast chicken and grits casserole. I know people in Leesburg who will drive over for lunch or dinner at **Violino Ristorante Italiano** (✆ **540/667-8006**). **Thai Winchester** (✆ **540/678-0055**) has a very good beef salad. For informal fare, there's the publike **Brewbaker's** (✆ **540/667-0429**) and the British-style **Union Jack Pub & Restaurant** (✆ **540/722-2055**). All offer outdoor seating in good weather.

One Block West ★ AMERICAN You'll find some of Winchester's most refined dining in this small brick building almost hidden on Indian Alley, which runs north-south 1 block west of the Loudon Street mall (hence, the name of the restaurant). Although he changes the menu daily to take advantage of fresh produce, owner Ed Matthews always puts the grill to excellent use on steaks, tuna, lamb chops, pork loin, and bison. You can dine outside in warm weather.

25 S. Indian Alley (btw. Boscawen and Cork sts.). ✆ **540/662-1455.** www.oneblockwest.com. Reservations recommended, necessary on weekends. Main courses $22–$33. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11am–2pm and 5–10pm.

4 MIDDLETOWN & STRASBURG: ANTIQUES GALORE ★

Middletown: 13 miles S of Winchester, 174 miles NW of Richmond, 76 miles W of Washington, D.C.; Strasburg: 6 miles S of Middletown

On U.S. 11, essentially flanking the intersection of I-81 and I-66 south of Winchester, the hamlet of Middletown and the small town of Strasburg are collectively one of the best places in Virginia to browse for antiques and collectibles. This is especially true of Strasburg, which justifiably calls itself the "Antiques Capital of Virginia." The sprawling **Great Strasburg Antiques Emporium** is one of the state's largest collections of dealers. Both towns have exceptional country inns offering antiques-filled accommodations and fine dining, and Middletown's Wayside Theatre will entertain anyone who loves live theater.

In between Middletown and Strasburg stands Belle Grove Plantation, the 18th-century home of President James Madison's sister and later the site of a fierce Civil War battle. The house and battlefield now comprise a national historic site. Also in the Civil War, Gen. Stonewall Jackson rolled the railroad locomotives he stole from the Union during his daring Great Train Raid on Martinsburg, West Virginia, down the Valley Pike to the existing station at Strasburg, which is now a local museum.

Except for Belle Grove Plantation, the museums here are not as interesting as are others in the valley. Consequently, I would stop in Middletown and Strasburg either to hunt for antiques and collectibles or to stay in one of two inns in order to catch a show at the Wayside Theatre.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION For information contact the **Strasburg Chamber of Commerce,** 160 E. King St., Strasburg, VA 22657 (✆ **540/465-3187;** www.strasburgvachamber.com). The chamber's visitor center is in a Victorian house on U.S. 11 south of the Va. 55 intersection. It's open Monday to Friday from 10am to 3pm.

GETTING THERE From I-81, take Exit 302 west to U.S. 11 into Middletown. Take Exit 298 or 300 into Strasburg.

THE TOP ATTRACTION

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park ★★ One of the finest homes in the Shenandoah Valley, the beautiful Belle Grove stone mansion was built in 1797 by Maj. Isaac Hite, whose grandfather, Joist Hite, first settled here in 1732. Major Hite's wife was Nelly Madison Hite, sister of President James Madison. At Madison's request, Thomas Jefferson was actively involved in Belle Grove's design. The columns and Palladian-style front windows are just two examples of Jefferson's influence. Although now part of Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, P.O. Box 700, Middletown, VA 22645 (✆ **540/868-9176;** www.nps.gov/cebe), the mansion is owned and operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The interior is furnished with period antiques. You must take a guided 45-minute tour to go inside, but you can tour the grounds on your own.

Belle Grove was at the epicenter of the decisive Civil War Battle of Cedar Creek, fought on 4,000 acres surrounding the manor house on October 19, 1864. Across U.S. 11, the **Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation Visitors Center** (✆ **888/628-1864** or 540/869-2064; www.cedarcreekbattlefield.org) explains what happened and distributes the National Park Service's battlefield brochure. The battle is reenacted each year on the weekend closest to October 19.

336 Belle Grove Rd. (off U.S. 11), Middletown. ✆ **540/869-2028.** www.bellegrove.org. Admission $8 adults, $7 seniors, $4 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Belle Grove Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 1–5pm; Nov Sat 10am–3pm, Sun 1–4pm. Closed Dec–Mar except tours at Thanksgiving and Dec 25. Cedar Creek Battlefield Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 1–4pm; Nov–Mar by appt. only. Guided 45-min. house tours depart 15 min. past the hour (last tour 3:15pm). From Winchester, take U.S. 11 south or I-81 south to Exit 302 at Middletown, then U.S. 11 south 1 mile.

ANTIQUING

Antiques lovers will want to hunt in nearby Strasburg, which has a bevy of fine outlets at the intersection of U.S. 11 and Va. 55. The **Great Strasburg Antiques Emporium ★★,** 110 N. Massanutten St. (✆ **540/465-3711;** www.strasburgemporium.com), is one of the state's largest shops, an enormous warehouse with vendors selling both antiques and a plethora of collectibles (I have become lost wandering around this labyrinth). It's open Sunday to Thursday from 10am to 5pm, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 6pm. A coffee shop serves sandwiches and salads for lunch.

You can't buy them, but there are plenty of antiques at the **Strasburg Museum,** 440 E. King St. (Va. 55; ✆ **540/465-3175**), just 2 blocks east of the emporium. It occupies the old train station where Stonewall Jackson brought his stolen locomotives. Admission

is $3 for adults, $1 for teenagers, 50¢ for children 11 and younger. The museum is open May through October daily from 10am to 4pm.

WHERE TO STAY & DINE

Out in the hills northwest of Middletown, the serene **Inn at Vaucluse Spring,** 231 Vaucluse Spring Lane, Stephens City, VA 22655 (✆ **800/869-0525** or 540/869-0200; www.vauclusespring.com), offers a romantic retreat from life's pressures. It has 15 guest rooms in six buildings, including cottages and a Federal-style mansion house, the inn's centerpiece. A stay includes a three-course breakfast, and the inn is open for dinner on Friday and Saturday.

Hotel Strasburg ★ Built as a hospital in 1902, this Victorian hotel is furnished with an impressive collection of period pieces, many for sale. Most units are in the main building, but three suites and a room are in the Chandler House, while the Taylor House holds four suites. Ten rooms have Jacuzzis. Known for excellent international fare, the dining room is Strasburg's best place for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. A first-floor pub offers friendly conversation and libation.

213 Holliday St., Strasburg, VA 22657. ✆ **888/763-8327** or 540/465-9191. Fax 540/465-4788. www.hotelstrasburg.com. 29 units. $89–$115 double; $129–$190 suite. Weekend and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From I-81, take Exit 298 and go south on U.S. 11 1½ miles to the first traffic light; turn right 1 block, left at the light onto Holliday St. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

Wayside Inn ★ This rambling roadside inn first offered libation to Shenandoah Valley travelers in 1724, and it has continued to function ever since. In the 1960s, the late Washington financier and antiques collector Leo M. Bernstein restored it, and today, rooms are beautifully decorated with an assortment of 18th- and 19th-century pieces. Each room's decor reflects a period style, from Colonial to elaborate Victorian Renaissance Revival. Expect to find canopied beds, armoires, highboys, writing desks, antique clocks, and stenciled or papered walls adorned with fine prints and oil paintings. Southern-style home cooking is served in seven antiques-filled dining rooms. Cocktails and light fare are served in **Larrick's Tavern.**

7783 Main St., Middletown, VA 22645. ✆ **877/869-1797** or 540/869-1797. Fax 540/869-6038. www.alongthewayside.com. 24 units. $99–$169 double. Weekend and theater packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From I-81, take Exit 302 to U.S. 11 (Main St.). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV.

MIDDLETOWN AFTER DARK

Since 1961, the **Wayside Theatre,** 7853 Main St. (U.S. 11) in Middletown (✆ **540/869-1776;** www.waysidetheatre.org), has staged fine productions by contemporary dramatists. The late actor Peter Boyle and actresses Susan Sarandon and Donna McKechnie began their careers here. Tickets range from $12 to $30. The box office is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm.

5 FRONT ROYAL: A SPY'S HOME

20 miles SE of Strasburg; 174 miles NW of Richmond; 70 miles W of Washington, D.C.

At the northern end of the Skyline Drive, Front Royal has the valley's widest array of outdoor activities: golfing; horseback riding; and canoeing, rafting, kayaking, and inner tubing on the sometimes lazy, sometimes rapid South Fork of the Shenandoah River (see "Rafting, Canoeing & Kayaking on the Shenandoah," below). And if you didn't

disappear into the caverns in Luray, you can go underground here. If you're not headed into the great outdoors, you can see the town's sights in half a day.

Strategically located on a plain near a pass in the Blue Ridge and at the juncture of the north and south forks of the Shenandoah River, Front Royal was named for a royal oak that stood in the town square during the Revolutionary War. In those days, it was a wild and woolly frontier way station at the junction of the two trails that later became U.S. 340 and Va. 55. During the Civil War, it was home to the infamous Confederate spy Belle Boyd, whose close contact—to say the least—with Union officers led to Stonewall Jackson's surprise victory at the Battle of Front Royal in 1862.

Across the mountains to the east are two wineries and the nationally famous inn and restaurant in "Little Washington."

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Contact the **Front Royal/Warren County Visitors Center,** 414 E. Main St., Front Royal, VA 22630 (✆ **800/338-2576** or 540/635-5788; fax 540/622-2644; www.discoverfrontroyal.com). It's in the old train station and is open daily from 9am to 5pm except New Year's, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. From I-66, follow U.S. 340 into town and turn left on Main Street at the Warren County Courthouse.

GETTING THERE From I-66, take Exit 6, U.S. 340/U.S. 522 south; it's 5 minutes to town. Front Royal is also easily reached from I-81 by taking I-66 east to Exit 6.

EXPLORING THE TOWN & THE CAVERNS

Civil War enthusiasts should pick up a free driving tour brochure from the visitor center (see "Essentials," above). It will lead you to the key sites of the Battle of Front Royal, which Stonewall Jackson won in May 1862. He directed his troops from atop a knoll in **Prospect Hill Cemetery,** on Prospect Street, where the remains of 276 soldiers from all 13 Confederate states are buried.

In downtown, you'll find two mildly fascinating Civil War attractions on Chester Street, 1 block north of the visitor center. You should be able to see them both in 1½ hours.

Operated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the **Warren Rifles Confederate Museum,** 95 Chester St. (✆ **540/636-6982;** http://users.erols.com/va-udc/museum.html), memorializes the great conflict with a collection of Civil War firearms, battle flags, uniforms, letters, diaries, and other personal items. Admission is $5 for adults, free for students and children accompanied by adults. It's open April 15 through November 1 Monday to Saturday from 9am to 4pm, Sunday noon to 4pm, and by appointment the rest of the year.

Next door behind Ivy Lodge, home to the **Warren Heritage Society** (✆ **540/636-1446;** www.warrenheritagesociety.org), is the restored **Belle Boyd Cottage,** in which the Confederate spy pillow-talked with her unsuspecting Union lovers. The white, house-size cottage now houses the society's archives. It's open Monday to Saturday from noon to 4pm. Admission is $3 per person, free for children under 10. Or you can buy a combination ticket for $5 and visit the **Balthis House,** built in 1788 and the oldest remaining house on Chester Street.

Skyline Caverns (Kids) Although not as varied as those in Luray Caverns (see section 6), the highlights here are rock formations called anthodites—delicate white spikes that spread in all directions from their positions on the cave ceiling. Their growth rate is about

Rafting, Canoeing & Kayaking on the Shenandoah

The streams flowing west down from Shenandoah National Park end up in the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, which winds its way through a narrow valley between the Blue Ridge and Massanutten mountains. The switchbacks between Front Royal and Luray are the region's main center for river rafting, canoeing, and kayaking from mid-March to mid-November. The amount of recent rain will determine whether you go white-water rafting, canoeing, kayaking, or just lazily floating downstream in an inner tube.

About 5½ miles of the river skirts the **Raymond R. "Andy" Guest Jr. Shenandoah River State Park,** 8 miles south of Front Royal on U.S. 340 (✆ **540/622-6840;** www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/andygues.htm). The park has 5½ miles of river frontage, 13 miles of hiking trails, fishing, horseback riding, picnic areas, and a primitive campground (✆ **800/933-PARK** [7275] or 804/225-8367 to reserve a site). The park is open daily from 8am to dusk. Admission is $3 per vehicle weekdays, $4 on weekends and holidays.

Several rafting and canoe outfitters are based along U.S. 340, which parallels the river between Front Royal and Luray. All require advance reservations, and all are closed from November through April.

- **Front Royal Canoe Company** (✆ **800/270-8808** or 540/635-5440; www.frontroyalcanoe.com) provides equipment and guides from its location on U.S. 340 south of Front Royal.
- In Bentonville, a small village about 8 miles south of Front Royal, you'll find **Downriver Canoe Company** (✆ **800/338-1963** or 540/635-5526; www.downriver.com).
- Near Luray, you can go with **Shenandoah River Outfitters** (✆ **800/622-6632** or 540/743-4159; www.shenandoah-river.com).

1 inch every 7,000 years. A sophisticated lighting system enhances formations like the Capitol Dome, Rainbow Trail, and Painted Desert. A miniature train covering about a half-mile is a popular attraction for kids. The cave temperature is a cool 54°F (12°C) year-round, and the tours take an hour, so bring a sweater, even in summer. Back on the surface, the kids can ride a miniature train and wander through the Enchanted Dragon Mirror Maze.

10344 Stonewall Jackson Hwy. (U.S. 340). ✆ **800/296-4545** or 540/635-4545. www.skylinecaverns.com. Cavern admission $16 adults, $8 children 7–13, free for children 6 and younger. Train rides $3 adults, free for children 5 and under. Mirror Maze $5 adults, free for children 5 and under. June 15 to Labor Day daily 9am–6pm; Mar 15–June 14 and day after Labor Day to Nov 14 Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, Sat–Sun 9am–6pm; Nov 15–Mar 14 daily 9am–4pm. Mandatory 1-hr. tours run continuously. Entry is 2 miles south of downtown Front Royal, 1 mile south of the Shenandoah National Park's northern entrance.

SPORTS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

GOLF Front Royal has more golf courses than any other valley town. Duffers are welcome at the 27-hole **Shenandoah Valley Golf Club** (✆ 540/635-3588; www.svgcgolf.com), the 36-hole **Bowling Green Country Club** (✆ 540/635-2095; www.bowlinggreencountryclub.net), the 18-hole **Jackson's Chase** (✆ 540/635-7814;

www.jacksonschase.com), the 18-hole **Blue Ridge Shadows Golf Club** (✆ 866/631-9661 or 540/631-9661; www.blueridgeshadows.com), and the 9-hole **Front Royal Country Club** (✆ 540/636-9062). Call for directions, starting times, and greens fees.

HORSEBACK RIDING The Front Royal area also offers more horseback riding than anywhere else in the valley. The 4,500-acre **Marriott Ranch,** 5305 Marriott Lane, Hume, VA 22639 (✆ **877/278-4574** or 540/364-2627; www.marriottranch.com), offers 1½-hour guided trail rides, buggy rides, summer sunset rides, and full-moon rides. Serious equestrians can stay over in **The Inn at Fairfield Farm,** the ranch's bed-and-breakfast inn (✆ **540/364-3221**), which has 10 rooms (7 with bathrooms). Hume is on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge, about 15 minutes from Front Royal via U.S. 522, C.R. 635, and C.R. 726.

Another stable is **Highlander Horses,** 5297 Reliance Rd., Front Royal (✆ **540/636-4523;** www.highlanderhorses.com).

WHERE TO STAY

The top chain hotel here is the **Holiday Inn & Suites at Front Royal Blue Ridge Shadows** (✆ **800/465-4329** or 540/631-3050; www.holidayinn.com/frontroyalva), in the rapidly developing stretch of U.S. 522/U.S. 340 north of I-66. It's adjacent to the Blue Ridge Shadows Golf Club (see "Sports & Outdoor Activities," above). Nearby is a **Hampton Inn** (✆ **800/426-7866** or 540/635-1822), on U.S. 340 south of I-66.

Within walking distance of the visitor center and museums is the recently renovated **Quality Inn Skyline Drive** (✆ **800/228-5151** or 540/635-3161), on U.S. 522 east of U.S. 340. An inexpensive **Super 8** (✆ **800/800-8000** or 540/636-4888) is at the junction of U.S. 340 and Va. 55.

My favorite bed-and-breakfast here is **Killahevlin,** 1401 N. Royal Ave. (✆ **800/847-6132** or 540/636-7335; www.vairish.com), occupying a hilltop mansion built by William Edward Carson, an Irishman who came to the United States in 1885 when he was 15 years old and amassed a fortune in the limestone business. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Among its luxurious amenities is an Irish pub just for guests.

Another good choice is the cozy **Woodward House on Manor Grade,** 413 S. Royal Ave./U.S. 340 South (✆ **800/635-7011;** www.acountryhome.com), 7 blocks south of the visitor center.

WHERE TO DINE

Main Street Mill Restaurant and Pub AMERICAN Occupying a picturesque 1922 mill building next door to the visitor center, this establishment has massive supporting columns and ceiling beams of chestnut. Local artist Patricia Windrow executed the distinctive *trompe l'oeil* murals representing Front Royal's pioneer and 19th-century eras. Lunch fare includes soups, spicy chili, salads, and overstuffed deli sandwiches. Main courses range from pastas to bacon-wrapped filet sirloin steak.

500 E. Main St. (next to visitor center). ✆ **540/636-3123.** Reservations not needed. Salads and sandwiches $4–$7.50; main courses $9–$20. AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 10:30am–9pm; Fri–Sat 10:30am–10pm.

Soul Mountain Café ★ Finds INTERNATIONAL A porcelain Buddha oversees this lively storefront bistro, where a crew of young chefs turn out wide-ranging fare. The mesclun salad with roasted tomato and tossed with pesto was very good and large enough for a light meal. Andouille sausage sautéed with peppers over penne pasta was almost too

cayenne-laden to eat, but the slow-roasted Jamaican jerk chicken with coconut cream treated my tropically inspired tongue with the utmost respect. The lunch menu adds delicious wraps.

300 E. Main St. (at Chester St.). ✆ **540/636-0070.** Reservations accepted. Main courses $13–$22. MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–9pm; Sun noon–4pm.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS TO "LITTLE WASHINGTON"

A more scenic alternative to taking the short route via U.S. 340 south from Front Royal to Luray is U.S. 522 across the Blue Ridge, then U.S. 211 west across Thornton Gap. This route takes you into the eastern Blue Ridge foothills, which are a southern extension of the Hunt Country described in chapter 5. The northern entry to the Shenandoah National Park's Central District is on U.S. 211.

Going this way will give you a chance to tipple the vintages at **Rappahannock Cellars,** on Hume Road (C.R. 635) between U.S. 522 and the village of Hume (✆ **540/635-9398;** www.rappahannockcellars.com), whose owners moved their winery here from California. It's open Sunday through Friday 11:30am to 5pm, Saturday 11:30am to 6pm.

Just off U.S. 211 you'll come to the two-street village of **Washington,** better known in these parts as "Little Washington." George Washington, then a surveyor's assistant, helped lay it out in 1749. Today it's dominated by The Inn at Little Washington (see below), but we common folk can walk across the street and grab a bite at the plain and inexpensive **Country Cafe** (✆ **540/675-1066**). It's open Monday to Thursday 8am to 8pm, Friday and Saturday 8am to 9pm. We can also catch chamber music, jazz, drama, or a film at the **Theatre at Washington** (✆ **540/675-1253;** www.theatre-washington-va.com).

Rather than forking over a king's ransom to stay at The Inn at Little Washington, we can retire at the **Heritage House Bed & Breakfast** (✆ **888/819-8280;** www.heritagehousebb.com) or the more expensive **Foster Harris House** (✆ **800/874-1036** or 540/675-3757; www.fosterharris.com), whose owner, John MacPherson, has written a cookbook with his breakfast recipes. Both are on Washington's Main Street.

Caledonia Farm–1812 ★ This 1812 Federal-style stone farmhouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a delightful country retreat set on a 115-acre working cattle farm adjacent to the Shenandoah National Park. A scenic old barn, livestock, and open pastureland make for a bucolic setting. The common rooms are furnished with country charm. The upstairs suite has two bedrooms and a private bathroom. A breezeway connects the main house with the romantic two-and-a-half-room guesthouse. Both suites offer working fireplaces and views of the Blue Ridge. TVs, VCRs, coffeemakers, and irons are available on request. There are bikes and a hot tub for guests' use. Host Phil Irwin, a retired broadcaster (as his deep voice will attest), will arrange hayrides and many other activities. Phil has stables for your pet horse.

47 Dearing Rd., Flint Hill, VA 22627. ✆ **800/262-1812** or 540/675-3693. www.bnb1812.com. 2 units. $140–$160 double. Rates include full breakfast. DISC, MC, V. From Front Royal, take U.S. 522 south 12 miles to Flint Hill and turn right onto C.R. 641, to C.R. 606 and then to C.R. 628; look for a sign indicating a right turn to the farm. No children 12 or under. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR (on request), fridge.

The Inn at Little Washington ★★★ One of America's finest country inns, this marvelous establishment is not so much an outstanding inn with a restaurant as it is an

outstanding restaurant with outstanding rooms. Owner/chef Patrick O'Connell makes inventive use of regional products—trout, Chesapeake Bay seafood, wild ducks, local cheeses—for his fabulous fixed-price dinners (if you have to ask how much, your credit limit likely isn't high enough). For a real treat, reserve one of the two fireside tables back in the kitchen, where you can watch the master and his crew at work. The extraordinary 14,000-bottle wine cellar may leave you pondering before selecting from its 40-page list (trust the waiters; they know what they're doing even if you don't). Dinner reservations are essential.

English decorator Joyce Evans magnificently appointed the inn's rooms, and her original sketches are framed and hanging in the upstairs hallways. The two bi-level suites have loft bedrooms, balconies overlooking the courtyard garden, and bathrooms with Jacuzzi tubs. Antiques and Oriental rugs add warmth to the rooms, distinguished by extravagantly canopied beds and hand-painted ceiling borders. Some rooms are across the street atop the inn's shops: The old Mayor's House has been turned into a suite with its own garden, and five other houses provide accommodations, including the Rose Cottage, which has hosted former Vice President Al Gore and his wife, Tipper.

Middle and Main sts. (P.O. Box 300), Washington, VA 22747. ✆ **540/675-3800.** Fax 540/675-3100. www.theinnatlittlewashington.com. 18 units. $410–$970 double; $675–$2,325 suite. Add $245 for Sat, $145 for Fri, $75 for Sun. Rates include continental breakfast and afternoon tea. MC, V. From Front Royal, take U.S. 522 south 16 miles, then west on U.S. 211 to Washington. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

6 LURAY: AN UNDERGROUND ORGAN

6 miles W of Shenandoah National Park; 91 miles SW of Washington, D.C.; 135 miles NW of Richmond

Established in 1812, this small town is home to the famous Luray Caverns, the most visited caves in the eastern United States. It also has a sensitive zoo, where rescued animals await to be visited. Although Luray has little else in the way of attractions, its accommodations are the closest to the Shenandoah National Park's popular Central District, making it the most convenient base in the valley if you can't get a room at one of the park's inns. The park headquarters and the Thornton Gap entry are up U.S. 211 a few miles east of town. Luray also is near the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, making it a center of watersports (see "Rafting, Canoeing & Kayaking on the Shenandoah," above).

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Located in the town's restored train station, the **Luray–Page County Chamber of Commerce,** 18 Campbell St., Luray, VA 22835 (✆ **888/743-3915** or 540/743-3915; fax 540/743-3944; www.luraypage.com), is a good source of information about Shenandoah National Park. From Main Street (Business U.S. 211) go south on Broad Street (Business U.S. 340). Open daily 9am to 5pm.

GETTING THERE Luray occupies the junction of U.S. 211 and U.S. 340. From Shenandoah National Park, take U.S. 211 west. From I-81, follow U.S. 211 East (this scenic road goes up and over Massanutten Mountain; see "A Mountain Resort with Golf & Skiing," below). From Front Royal, take U.S. 340 south. While U.S. 211 bypasses Luray to the north, Business U.S. 211 goes all the way through town as Main Street. Business U.S. 340 goes through downtown as Broad Street.

EXPLORING THE TOWN

You can get out of your vehicle and go for a pleasant stroll on the **Hawksbill Greenway,** a paved pedestrian path following Hawksbill Creek between downtown and the U.S. 211 bypass.

Luray Caverns ★★ Kids This U.S. Registered National Natural Landmark is the Shenandoah Valley's most interesting and entertaining cave. In addition to monumental columns in rooms more than 140 feet high, you'll see beautiful cascades of natural colors on the interior walls. The works of man and nature are combined into an unusual organ that produces music when rubber-tipped plungers tap the stalactites. There are no guided tours; instead, audio tours will lead you through a system of brick-and-concrete walkways. It's about 55°F (13°C) down here all the time, so bring a jacket or sweater. You get more for your money here, for admission to the caverns includes the **Car and Carriage Caravan Museum,** a collection of antique carriages, coaches, and cars—including actor Rudolph Valentino's 1925 Rolls-Royce. The complex also contains a snack bar, gift shop, and fudge kitchen. Separate admission is charged to get thoroughly confused in the outdoor **Garden Maze.**

Across U.S. 211 stands the **Luray Singing Tower,** a stone carillon with 47 bells. It was given to the town of Luray in 1937 as a memorial to one of its residents. Free concerts are given spring through autumn (pick up a schedule at the Luray visitor center or at the caverns).

U.S. 211 west (2 miles west of downtown). ✆ **540/743-6551.** www.luraycaverns.com. Admission to caverns and car museum $21 adults, $18 seniors, $10 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger; Garden Maze $6 adults, $5 children. Apr–June 14 daily 9am–6pm; June 15 to Labor Day daily 9am–7pm; day after Labor Day to Oct daily 9am–6pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Fri 9am–4pm, Sat–Sun 9am–5pm.

Luray Zoo ★ Kids Various "wild animal parks" and even a "Dinosaur Land" vie for your attention in the Shenandoah. If you're traveling with children, this small zoo is worth a stop. It's a rescue facility, which means owners Kilby and Jennifer Westhoff take in unwanted or abused exotic animals, including crocodiles and alligators. The snake collection is one of the largest on the East Coast. Best times to visit are the 11:30am animal encounter show or the 3:30pm venomous snake demonstration from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

1087 U.S. Hwy. 211 W. (2½ miles west of downtown). ✆ **540/743-4113.** www.lurayzoo.com. Admission $10 adults, $5 children 3–12, free for children 2 and younger. Apr–Oct daily 10am–5pm; Nov–Mar Sat–Sun 10am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

WHERE TO STAY

The **Days Inn,** on the U.S. 211 bypass north of town (✆ **800/325-2525** or 540/743-4521), is surrounded by acres of farmland, giving most rooms mountain views. The **Best Western,** on West Main Street/U.S. 211 Business (✆ **800/528-1234** or 540/743-6511), is an older motel opposite the Mimslyn Inn in town. Both have outdoor swimming pools.

The Cabins at Brookside Owners Bob and Cece Castle remodeled this 1940s service station/motel into a collection of log-look cabins with comfortable Williamsburg-style furnishings throughout. These are the closest accommodations to the Shenandoah National Park's Central District. Although located along busy U.S. 211, the rear of the cabins open to decks or sunrooms overlooking a bubbling brook, and road noise dies down after dark. Five "honeymoon" units have whirlpool tubs or hot tubs, four have gas

The "Cabin Capital of Virginia"

Just as bed-and-breakfasts once spread like wildfire across Virginia, **mountain cabins** are hot these days. There are so many of them for rent in these parts that Luray calls itself the "Cabin Capital of Virginia." Because many rentals are by the week, cabins and vacation homes are mostly taken by city folk on break from the nearby Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas. The easiest way to rent is through **Allstar Lodging** (✆ **866/780-STAR** [7827] or 540/843-0606; www.allstarlodging.com), an agency representing many cabin owners.

fireplaces, and one has a kitchen (the others, fridges only). None has a TV or phone, but three newer cabins about 2 miles away do.

2978 U.S. 211 E., Luray, VA 22835. ✆ **800/299-2655** or 540/743-5698. Fax 540/743-2413. www.brooksidecabins.com. 12 cabins. $85–$200 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From Luray, go east 4½ miles on U.S. 211. From Shenandoah National Park Headquarters, go west ½ mile on U.S. 211. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, fridge, no phone.

Luray Caverns Motel West Value Sitting opposite Luray Caverns, which owns and spotlessly maintains it, this older one-story motel with a plantation facade is dated, but the spacious rooms have pleasant views across pastureland to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The choice unit is an apartment with full kitchen. A sister establishment, the equally clean **Luray Caverns Motel East** (✆ **540/743-4531**), is a short distance east on U.S. 211 Business. Many of its 44 units are small but comfortable stone cottages. Rates are the same at both motels.

U.S. 211 W. (P.O. Box 748), Luray, VA 22835. ✆ **888/941-4531** or 540/743-4536. www.luraycaverns.com. 19 units. $72–$94 double; $144–$176 apt. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV.

The Mimslyn Inn ★★ Built in 1931 on 14 acres of lawns and trees, this 3-story colonial-style inn recently morphed into a luxury hotel equipped with a full-service spa. High-back rockers behind tall white columns on the front porch have Blue Ridge vistas, as do most of the guest rooms and the Skyline Terrace, an unusual third-floor sunroom and rooftop patio. Almost hidden behind the lobby fireplace, curving stairs lead up to the guest rooms and down to the spa and to the lively **Speakeasy Bar & Restaurant** (p. 165), Luray's favorite pub. While it serves excellent fare, the elegant **Circa '31** dining room off the lobby plays second fiddle to the Speakeasy. Each of the guest rooms is individually decorated, some with a European flair, other tending to Colonial Americana. The top-floor suites are by far the largest, with separate living rooms.

401 W. Main St., Luray, VA 22835. ✆ **800/296-5105** or 540/743-5105. Fax 540/743-2632. www.mimslyninn.com. 45 units. $115–$135 double; $235–$325 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; health club; Jacuzzi; heated outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some suites), hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Bed & Breakfasts

Woodruff Inns ★ Three charming Victorian houses make up this collection of B&Bs. The star is the **Victorian Inn,** on Main Street, which has three romantic, Jacuzzi-equipped suites. The suites have sun-filled sitting rooms and balconies with private entries so you don't have to go through the house to get to your room. The master suite also has a decorative fireplace—in the bathroom, of all places. Less expensive but

nonetheless charming are rooms in the nearby **Woodruff House** and the **Victorian Rose.** They both have hot tubs in their gardens. All three houses are furnished with mid- to late-19th-century antiques.

138 E. Main St., Luray, VA 22835. ✆ **866/937-3466** or 540/743-1494. Fax 540/743-1722. www.woodruffinns.com. 9 units. $109–$229 double. Rates include breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Jacuzzi. *In room:* A/C.

A Nearby Equestrian Inn

Jordan Hollow Inn ★★ Horse lovers and hikers have been enjoying this working farm and inn since 1980. It has 5 picturesque miles of hiking trails at the base of Hawksbill Mountain. The inn no longer rents horses, but the nearby **Jordan Hollow Stables** does (✆ **540/7778-2623;** www.jordanhollowstables.com). Log veneers add a rustic touch to the buildings. Three types of guest quarters are offered. Those in the vine-entangled Arbor View are suites with separate living rooms and spacious, romantic bedrooms with a two-person whirlpool tub in one corner, a realistic-looking electric fireplace in another. The bedrooms open to a long porch with high-backed rockers suitable for taking in the mountain view. The units in the log-sided, cabinlike Mare Meadow Lodge sport oversize rustic furniture. Most luxurious of all are six log cabins atop a hill with great views of Hawksbill Mountain. These have two-person hot tubs, flatscreen TVs with DVD players, and small fireplaces.

The **Farmhouse Restaurant,** in the original clapboard homestead with wraparound porches upstairs and down, offers very good cuisine, much of it with an Indian flare, along with Virginia wine. It's open for dinner Monday to Saturday from 5 to 8:30pm. Reservations recommended.

326 Hawksbill Park Rd., Stanley, VA 22851. ✆ **888/418-7000** or 540/778-2285. Fax 540/778-1759. www.jordanhollow.com. 20 units. $190–$250 double; $300 cabin. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed 1–3 weeks in Jan. From Luray, take Business U.S. 340 south 6 miles, turn left on Hawksbill Park Dr. (C.R. 624), left on Marksville Rd. (C.R. 689), right on Hawksbill Park Rd. (C.R. 629). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (except cabins).

WHERE TO DINE

The Mimslyn Inn's Circa '31 and the Farmhouse Restaurant at Jordan Hollow Inn (see above) serve some of the best cuisine in this area.

My choice for morning coffee, bagels, and croissants is **A Moment to Remember Espresso Bar & Cafe,** 55 E. Main St. (✆ **540/743-1121;** www.a-moment2remember.com), which also has terrific mesquite chicken salad for lunch.

Artisans Grill AMERICAN This casual restaurant occupies a storefront strategically located on Main Street (Business U.S. 211) at its junction with Broad Street (Business U.S. 340) in the center of town. The menu offers a wide selection of salads, burgers, and sandwiches throughout the day, while dinnertime sees consistently good chargrilled steaks, chicken, ribs, and fish.

2 Main St. (at Broad St.). ✆ **540/743-7030.** www.artisansgrill.com. Reservations accepted. Sandwiches and salads $4–$9; main courses $18–$28. Sun–Mon and Thurs 11am–8pm; Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–9pm. Closed Tues.

The Speakeasy Bar & Restaurant AMERICAN I've been to Luray many times, but until recently there was little in the way of entertainment. That changed with the renovation of the Mimslyn Inn and the opening of this downstairs restaurant, the only real pub in town. It can be packed when musicians perform from Thursday to Saturday

New Market: Students at War

Between Luray and Staunton at the intersection of I-81 and U.S. 211, the village of **New Market** holds a hallowed place in Civil War history, for it was here that 257 Virginia Military Institute cadets charged the veteran Union lines on May 15, 1864, won the day, and returned to campus victorious. A descendant of Thomas Jefferson and nine other students were killed and 47 were wounded. Hearing of the battle, Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant exclaimed, "The South is robbing the cradle and the grave."

Today the cadets are honored by the **New Market Battlefield State Historical Park** and the **Hall of Valor Museum** ★★, 8895 Collins Dr. (✆ **540/740-3101;** www4.vmi.edu/museum/nm). The Hall of Valor is one of Virginia's finest Civil War museums. Two films, including the award-winning *Field of Lost Shoes* (45 min.), tell the story. Explaining the military strategies, the museum's circular display of photos and newspaper headlines is the best chronological account of the war in Virginia I've seen. It begins with a wall-size painting of Richmond before the war and ends with a photo of the burned-out city in 1865.

Outside on the rolling, grassy fields, students lead 1-hour tours at 1 and 3pm daily during summer, or you can take a self-guided 1-mile walking tour along the final Confederate assault on the Union line. The Bushong farmhouse, which served as a battlefield hospital, is now a museum of 19th-century valley life.

Admission is $10 for adults, $9 seniors and active-duty military, $6 for children 6 to 17, free for kids 5 and younger. The museum is open daily 9am to 5pm except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas. The battle is reenacted in May on the weekend after Mother's Day.

While here you can explore New Market's many antique and collectibles stores along Congress Street (U.S. 11) and sample good home cooking at the inexpensive **Southern Kitchen,** 9576 Congress St. (✆ **540/740-3514**), ½ mile south of the I-81 interchange. It's open daily 7am to 9pm.

nights. The chow is very good pub fare such as nachos, burgers, wraps, fish and chips, and pan-fried mountain trout.

In the Mimslyn Inn, 401 W. Main St. ✆ **540/743-5105.** www.mimslyninn.com. Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches $9–$13; main courses $14–$25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Wed 4–10pm; Thurs–Sat 4pm–midnight.

The Victorian Inn AMERICAN At night the first floor of this member of the Woodruff Inns (see "Where to Stay," above) turns into a romantic fine-dining venue. The menu varies by season and availability of local produce. One autumn evening saw pork tenderloin with pineapple salsa and Cornish hen with an apple cider sauce. Summer might see salmon baked in a garlic-wine sauce. Virginia vintages always appear on the wine list. Best tables in warm weather are on the front porch.

138 E. Main St. ✆ **540/743-1494.** www.woodruffinns.com. Reservations requested on weekends. Main courses $13–$20. AE, DISC, MC, V. Wed–Sun 5–9pm.

A MOUNTAIN RESORT WITH GOLF & SKIING

Primarily a timeshare operation, **Massanutten Resort,** P.O. Box 1227, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 (✆ **800/207-6277** or 540/289-9441; www.massresort.com), offers year-round outdoor activities. The property has 27 holes of golf, tennis courts, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a half-dozen downhill ski slopes, and areas for snowboarding and snow tubing (riding inner tubes down a gentle slope). The 140 hotel rooms have a queen-size or two double beds, sitting areas, and balconies. Most of the 800-plus timeshare units are equipped with kitchens, fireplaces, and decks, and many have whirlpools. There's a full-service restaurant, a pizzeria, bar, and grocery store on-site. From I-81, take Exit 247A and follow U.S. 33 east 10 miles to the resort entrance on the left.

7 STAUNTON: A PRESIDENT & THE BARD ★★★

42 miles S of New Market; 142 miles SW of Washington, D.C.; 92 miles NW of Richmond

The birthplace of Woodrow Wilson, our 28th president, Staunton (pronounced "*Stan*-ton") is equally proud today of its Blackfriars Playhouse, a stunning replica of one of Shakespeare's theaters, which brings the Bard to the Shenandoah and makes Staunton the valley's prime performing-arts center. Along with Wilson's first home, many 19th-century downtown buildings in Staunton's revitalized historic district have been refurbished, including the train station and its adjacent **Wharf District,** now a shopping and dining complex. The mostly female **Mary Baldwin College,** whose pastoral campus lies across the street from the Wilson birthplace, lends a university atmosphere to this downtown in renaissance.

Settled well before the Revolution, Staunton was a major stop for pioneers on the way west. The Frontier Culture Museum on the outskirts of town explains the origins of the unique Shenandoah Valley farming communities. In the early 1800s, this was the eastern terminus of the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike (now U.S. 250), a major mountain road linking the Shenandoah Valley and the Ohio River. When the Central Virginia Railroad arrived in 1854, Staunton became even more of a regional center.

Plan to spend at least a full day exploring one of Virginia's best small towns and an evening at the theater.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Staunton Visitors Center,** 35 S. New St. (at Johnson St.), Staunton, VA 24401 (✆ **540/332-3971;** www.visitstaunton.com), provides information, free maps, and walking-tour brochures to the historic district. It's open from April through October daily 9am to 6:30pm, November through March daily 9:30am to 5:30pm.

You can also get general information from the **Staunton/Augusta County Travel Information Center** (✆ **800/332-5219** or 540/332-3972) at the Frontier Culture Museum, on U.S. 250 west of Exit 222 off I-81. It is open daily from 9am to 5pm except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

GETTING THERE Staunton is at the junctions of I-64 and I-81 and U.S. 11 and U.S. 250. **Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport** (SHD; ✆ **540/234-8304;** www.flyshd.com) is off I-81 between Harrisonburg and Staunton, but the nearest major airports are at

Fun Facts Mr. Jefferson on the Run

Staunton served as Virginia's capital for 17 days during June 1781, when then-Governor Thomas Jefferson fled Richmond to avoid advancing British troops.

Roanoke and Richmond. **Amtrak** trains serve Staunton's station at 1 Middlebrook Ave. (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com).

GETTING AROUND The free **Downtown Staunton Trolley** runs around town approximately every 30 minutes. The Green Line covers downtown and nearby areas, while the Silver Line goes farther afield. The Red Line runs around downtown on Friday and Saturday evenings. Their hours change seasonally, so pick up a schedule at the Staunton Visitors Center, the trolley's first stop at 15 and 45 minutes after the hour (see "Visitor Information," above). There's no narration, but riding the Green Line will give you a 30-minute overview of the town.

EXPLORING THE TOWN

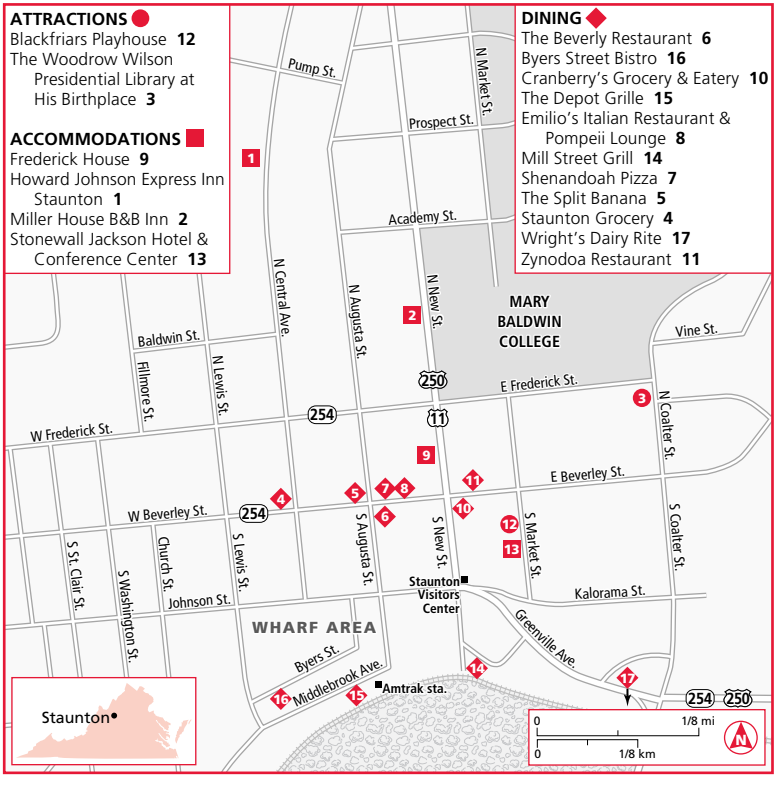
Downtown Staunton is a treasure trove of Victorian architecture, from stately residences to the commercial buildings downtown and in the adjacent Wharf District (actually along the railroad, not a river). Pick up a walking-tour brochure from the visitor center (see "Essentials," above), and set out on your own. The brochure describes five tours, but be sure to take the "Beverly" and "Wharf" tours, which cover all of historic downtown.

Blackfriars Playhouse ★★★ Finds Home to the **American Shakespeare Center,** this stunning re-creation of the first indoor theater in the English-speaking world, which William Shakespeare and his colleagues built on part of London's Blackfriars Monastery in 1642, is, in itself, a reason to visit Staunton. As in the Bard's time, the audience sits on three sides of the stage, most on benches (don't worry; you can rent cushions and seat backs). Members of the theater's acclaimed resident company as well as touring troupes perform Shakespeare's masterpieces, but the theater also hosts other classic plays. Be sure to take an actor-led guided tour, which sheds light not only on this theater but also how plays were performed in the Bard's day.

10 S. Market St. (btw. Beverley and Johnson sts.). ✆ **877/682-4235** or 540/851-1733. www.americanshakespearecenter.com. Tours $5; tickets $10–$40. Box office Mon–Sat 9:30am–5pm. 1-hr. tours usually Mon–Fri 11am and 2pm, Sat 11am (call for current schedule).

Frontier Culture Museum Kids In light of its history as a major stopping point for pioneers, Staunton is a logical location for this museum, which consists of 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century working farmsteads representing the Old World origins of the Shenandoah's early settlers—Northern Irish, English, and German—and explaining how aspects of each were blended into a fourth farm, a typical Colonial American homestead. Staff members in period costumes plant fields, tend livestock, and do domestic chores. A 15-minute film will set the stage for your self-guided exploration, which will take about 2 hours to thoroughly cover. Children will love seeing the animals, but bring them in warm weather as many exhibits are outdoors. The museum store sells marvelously smooth fudge freshly made by the dairy farm.

Richmond Rd. (U.S. 250), ½ mile west of I-81. ✆ **540/332-7850.** www.frontiermuseum.org. Admission $10 adults, $9.50 seniors, $9 students, $6 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Mid-Mar to Nov daily 9am–5pm; Dec to mid-Mar daily 10am–4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.



The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library at His Birthplace ★★★ A National Historic Landmark, this handsome home, built in 1846 by a Presbyterian congregation as a manse for their ministers, stands beside an excellent library and museum detailing Wilson's life. The future president was born here on December 28, 1856, but the family left Staunton when he was only 2. The house is furnished with many family items, including Wilson's crib and the chair in which his mother rocked him. The galleries of the museum next door trace Wilson's Scotch-Irish roots, his academic career as a professor and president at Princeton University, and, of course, his 8 presidential years (1913–21), which spanned World War I. Don't overlook the beautiful Victorian garden or Wilson's presidential limousine, a shiny Pierce-Arrow. You must take the 40-minute guided tour of the house, but you can wander through the museum and gardens on your own. About 1½ hours will be required to see it all.

24 N. Coalter St. (at Frederick St.). ✆ **888/496-6376** or 540/885-0897. www.woodrowwilson.org. Admission $12 adults, $10 seniors, $5 students, $3 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm; Nov–Feb Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun noon–4pm. 40-min. guided house tours depart every 45 min.

Guided Tours

Free 2-hour **guided tours** of downtown depart from in front of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library at His Birthplace at 10am on Saturday from May through October.

Local native Marney Gibbs of **Staunton Guided Tours** (✆ **540/885-2430;** www.stauntonguidedtours.com) will provide narration as you ride the trolley around town followed by a 10-block walking tour of downtown. She charges $15 for adults, $7 for children 7 to 13. Reservations are required.

Whether you do it yourself or take the guided tour, be prepared to work up a sweat: Staunton is built on the side of a steep hill, a la San Francisco.

SHOPPING

Beverley Street between Lewis and Market streets—downtown Staunton's main drag—is a fine place to browse a number of art galleries and antiques stores. I'm always left astounded by the vast collection of old stuff crammed into **Worthington Hardware Co.,** 26 W. Beverley St. (✆ **540/885-0891**), which once was a hardware store. The **Wharf District,** along Middlebrook Avenue and Byers Street, has more antiques shops.

Fans of the singing Statler Brothers, who grew up here, can buy their albums and souvenirs at their **Statler Brothers Gift Shop,** 1409 N. August St. (✆ **540/885-7297;** www.statlerbrothers.com).

The town of Waynesboro, 15 miles east of Staunton on I-64, is home to the **Artisans Center of Virginia,** 801 W. Broad St. (U.S. 340; ✆ **877/508-6069** or 540/946-3294; www.artisanscenterofvirginia.org), which represents more than 200 skilled artisans from throughout Virginia, each chosen by a jury. You can both browse and buy their work in the center's gallery. Also in Waynesboro is the **P. Buckley Moss Museum,** 150 P. Buckley Moss Dr. (✆ **800/343-8643** or 540/949-6473; www.pbuckleymoss.com), which displays her endearing paintings, many inspired by the valley's Amish and Mennonite communities. She has been a full- or part-time resident of Waynesboro since 1964.

WHERE TO STAY

The budget-priced **Howard Johnson Express Inn,** 268 N. Central Ave. (✆ **800/446-4656** or 540/886-5330; www.hojo.com), is downtown's only chain motel. The four-story building faces a parking lot, but the rooms are moderately spacious and reasonably comfortable. Three rooms have Jacuzzi tubs, and there's an outdoor pool.

Near Exit 225 off I-85 (Woodrow Wilson Pkwy.) north of town, the **Holiday Inn Golf & Conference Center** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 540/248-6020) is adjacent to the Country Club of Staunton, where guests can play. Staunton's largest concentration of motels is on U.S. 250 at Exit 222 off I-81, where you'll find the **Best Western Staunton Inn** (✆ 800/528-1234 or 540/885-1112), a **Comfort Inn** (✆ 800/228-5150 or 540/886-5000), an above-average **Econo Lodge** (✆ 800/446-6900 or 540/885-5158), a **Hampton Inn** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 540/886-7000), and a **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 540/886-2888).

Bed-and-breakfasts in Staunton include **Miller House Bed & Breakfast Inn,** 210 N. New St. (✆ **877/996-3186** or 540/886-3186; www.millerhousebandb.com), a large Victorian with wraparound porch.

Frederick House ★★ I always stay in one of these seven historic town houses dating from 1810 and now a European-style hotel, that is, a cross between an inn and a bed-and-breakfast. The rooms and suites are individually decorated with authentic antiques and reproductions from the Victorian era. Most have gleaming hardwood floors below Oriental rugs, and seven units have decorative fireplaces. All suites have separate living

Finds The 1950s Live

The 1950s are still very much alive at **Wright's Dairy Rite,** 346 Greenville Ave. (U.S. 11), a block south of Richmond Road (✆ **540/886-0435**), a classic drive-in that has had carhop service since it opened in 1952. Even if you dine inside this brick building or outside on the patio, you must lift a phone to place your order, and then wait for it to be delivered to your leatherette booth. Nothing here costs more than $8. MasterCard and Visa are accepted. Open Sunday through Thursday from 10am to 10pm, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 11pm (until 9 and 10pm, respectively, during winter).

rooms, and three of them have two bedrooms. If you don't mind bright light at the crack of dawn, my favorite unit here is the Harmon Suite, whose bedroom once was a sun porch extending across the rear of one of the houses. With an oversize king-size bed, it's understandably the honeymoon suite. Frederick House is across the street from Mary Baldwin College and just 2 blocks from Woodrow Wilson's birthplace and the Blackfriars Playhouse.

28 N. New St., Staunton, VA 24401. ✆ **800/334-5575** or 540/885-4220. Fax 540/885-5180. www.frederickhouse.com. 23 units. $103–$186 double; $153–$276 suite. Rates include full breakfast. Theater and other packages available. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Access to nearby health club. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Stonewall Jackson Hotel & Conference Center Next door to the Blackfriars Playhouse, this classic downtown hotel first opened in 1924 and served as Staunton's special-occasions center until the 1960s, when it fell on hard times and was turned into an assisted-living facility. Thanks to a recent $21-million restoration, it's back in business as the town's prime commercial hotel and conference center. Be sure to walk up on the mezzanine and check out the 1924 Wurlitzer piano-organ. It overlooks the bright lobby whose walls showcase some of the hotel's original silverware, dishes, and other 1920s mementos. The main dining room off the lobby provides breakfast daily, while the lobby lounge serves dinner. Rooms in the original building were expanded and updated but are still a tad smaller than those in a new wing added during the restoration. They all have antique-look furniture, writing desks, two phones, and bathrooms with ample granite vanities. There's an indoor pool here.

24 S. Market St., Staunton, VA 24401. ✆ **866/880-0024** or 540/885-4848. Fax 540/885-4840. www.stonewalljacksonhotel.com. 124 units. $99–$189 double; $210–$410 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

Staunton probably runs second only to Charlottesville in restaurants per capita, and it keeps adding more as the town's renaissance continues. In fact, there are so many that I wonder if the local residents know how to cook for themselves.

Staunton Station, the town's old railway depot on Middlebrook Avenue between Augusta and Lewis streets in the Wharf District, is now a dining/entertainment complex. The train station is home to the family-oriented **Depot Grille** (✆ **540/885-7332**). Nearby, **Byers Street Bistro** (✆ **540/887-8100**) is a lively restaurant-bar with warm-weather outdoor tables fronting a municipal parking lot on Byers Street at Central Avenue. All are moderately priced.

A nearby pub I like for both food and ambience is **Mill Street Grill,** 1 Mill St. (✆ **540/886-0656**), south of Johnson Street. Occupying the basement of the old White Star mill, which produced Melrose flour from 1890 to 1963, it offers barbecue ribs, steaks, prime rib, and seafood as well as vegetarian dishes. Heavy beams and backlit stained-glass windows portraying chefs at work help make it warm and cozy.

Staunton's top restaurants (see below) are along Beverly Street, the main drag, where you'll also fine excellent pies at **Shenandoah Pizza** (✆ **540/213-0008**) and rich, smooth homemade ice cream at **The Split Banana** (✆ **540/908-2962**).

The Beverly Restaurant (Value) AMERICAN Family-owned and -operated since 1961, this storefront breakfast-and-lunch spot hearkens back to that nearly bygone era when even hash-house cooks made everything from scratch. The Virginia country ham here is the best I've had anywhere. The lunch fare consists of down-home salads, sandwiches, and a few daily specials.

12 E. Beverly St. ✆ **540/886-4317.** Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $3–$8.50; sandwiches $5.50–$8. MC, V. Mon–Tues and Thurs–Sat 7am–3pm.

Cranberry's Grocery & Eatery ★ (Value) HEALTH/VEGETARIAN Walk through this gourmet natural-foods grocery to the counter in the rear, where you can order the healthiest breakfast or lunch in Staunton. Fresh fruit, freshly baked muffins, and yeast waffles lead the morning list. Lunch brings sandwiches, salads, and huge wraps, some with meat or chicken but most vegetarian. Wash it down with a freshly squeezed veggie juice.

7 South New St. ✆ **540/885-4755.** www.gocranberrys.com. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $3–$6.50; salads and sandwiches $5.50–$7. MC, V. Apr–Nov Mon–Wed 7:30am–5pm; Thurs–Sat 7:30am–7:30pm. Dec–Mar Mon–Sat 7:30am–5pm.

Emilio's Italian Restaurant and Pompeii Lounge ★ ITALIAN This pleasant establishment is run by accomplished cooks who moved here from Italy. You'll enter through a nondescript foyer in front of a small bar, but French doors lead to sophisticated L'Italia, with modern art hung in lighted alcoves. Ceiling spotlights highlight the black tables and chairs set far apart for privacy. Upstairs, the Pompeii Lounge presents outdoor dining on its rooftop patio, which hosts live music Thursday to Saturday nights during summer. The well-prepared offerings at both institutions range from Sicilian-style veal parmigiana to northern Italian veal piccata in a sauce of white wine, lemon, and capers.

23 E. Beverly St. ✆ **540/885-0102.** Reservations recommended. Pasta $14–$18; main courses $14–$25. AE, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 11am–9pm. Pompeii Lounge till later Fri–Sat.

Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant and Bakery ★★ (Value) AMERICAN Opened in 1947 by the late Mrs. Mildred Rowe and still run by her family, this is one of the better home-style restaurants in Virginia. Made from recipes from Mrs. Rowe's own cookbook, dishes here are very much in the Southern tradition but lighter than the usual fare cooked with prodigious portions of salt and lard. Grilled steaks, country ham, and pork chops lead the regular items, and you can also choose from daily specials such as meatloaf and gravy or fried flounder filet, but this is not the best place for fried chicken. I often order a vegetable plate, so good is the corn pudding, spoon bread, baked tomatoes, and cucumber-and-onion salad. Locals order slices of pie along with their main courses, just to make sure they get their favorite flavors.

74 Rowe Rd. (U.S. 250, just east of I-81). ✆ **540/886-1833.** www.mrsrowes.com. Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches $4–$7.50; main courses $8–$15. DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7am–8pm; Sun 7am–7pm. Breakfast daily 7–10:45am.

Staunton Grocery ★★ AMERICAN Until another establishment opens and robs it of its perch, this is Staunton's top restaurant. Although bistro-style, it's more formal and intimate than its main competitor, Zynodoa Restaurant (see below), as its candles and white-linen table cloths attest. The menu, which changes frequently depending on what the chef has corraled from local farms, is expressed for foodies. One recent offering: "Roasted monk fish + house cured bacon + hominy stew + fried pork belly + garlic kale." That's a lot of olde Virginny ingredients, but it was anything but down-home cooking. Yummy!

105 W. Beverly St. ✆ **540/886-6880.** www.stauntongrocery.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $23–$28. AE, MC, V. Tues 5:30–9pm; Wed–Sat 11am–2pm and 5:30–9pm; Sun 5–8pm.

Zynodoa Restaurant ★★ AMERICAN This casual bistro in a converted storefront takes its name from the American Indian pronunciation of "Shenandoah." You can converse with local professionals at the friendly bar before retiring to a booth or table to pick from an eclectic menu that changes seasonally. Appetizers such as seared sea scallops with steamed asparagus and shaved Romano cheese are smallish though artistically presented, whereas the main courses are more substantial. Lamb, duck, and filet mignon are constants, but I like the spicy Thai shrimp as well as the meatloaf served with a mango-tinged barbecue sauce.

115 E. Beverley St. ✆ **540/885-7775.** www.zynodoa.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $18–$25. AE, MC, V. Wed–Sat 5–11:30pm; Sun noon–8pm.

STAUNTON AFTER DARK

Staunton's showpiece is the **Blackfriars Playhouse** (see above), where you can see performances of Shakespeare's plays as well as concerts. For art-house movie fans, the restored **Visulite Cinemas,** 12 N. Augusta St. (✆ **540/885-9958;** www.visulitecinemas.com), showcases offbeat films such as Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Affair,* which the mall cinemas won't touch in these Republican-leaning parts. The Visulite dates from 1937.

The pubs in and around **Staunton Station,** the old railway depot on Millwood Avenue (see "Where to Dine," above), as well as the Pompeii Lounge on East Beverly Street, have live bands playing on weekend nights. The city has a summertime program of free outdoor concerts in Gypsy Hill Park and the Wharf District. Check with the visitor center for a schedule.

STAUNTON-TO-LEXINGTON VIA RAPHINE

The rural area around the tiny hamlet of Raphine, about halfway between Staunton and Lexington, is quintessential Shenandoah Valley, with country roads winding among farms blanketing steep hills. This gorgeous area makes an easy excursion from either of the two towns or as a stop when traveling between them. The quick way is via I-81, but Va. 252 is much more scenic. However you get here, follow Raphine Road (C.R. 606) between the Interstate and Va. 252.

Starting at Exit 205 off I-81, take Va. 56 east toward Steele's Tavern and follow the signs to the picturesque **Cyrus McCormick Farm** (✆ **540/377-2255;** www.vaes.vt.edu/steeles/mccormick/mccormick.html). Now part of a Virginia Tech agricultural research facility, it's in a lovely rural setting with a small blacksmith shop, a gristmill, and other

log cabins, where exhibits include a model of Cyrus McCormick's 1831 invention, the first reaper, which revolutionized American agriculture and made him a fortune. This is an excellent place to spread out a picnic and take a half-mile walk along Mad Creek to the mill pond. It's open daily from 8:30am to 5pm; admission is free.

Now backtrack west on Va. 56, go under I-81, and follow C.R. 606 for 1 mile through Raphine to the award-winning **Rockbridge Vineyard** (✆ **888/511-9463** or 540/377-6204; www.rockbridgevineyard.com). The tasting room is open Sunday and Monday from noon to 5pm, Tuesday through Saturday 10am to 6pm.

Four miles west of I-81 is the 1882-vintage **Wade's Mill** (✆ **540/348-1400;** www.wadesmill.com), which grinds whole grains into flour, cornmeal, polenta, semolina, and an herb beer mix for pancakes (the mill supplies the area's top restaurants). The shop sells high-quality kitchen gear, and occasional cooking events feature guest chefs. The mill is open from April to the Sunday before Christmas, Wednesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, and on Sunday from 1 to 5pm during spring and autumn.

Most of this area is in northern Rockbridge County, so contact the **Lexington & Rockbridge Area Visitor Center** for more information (see section 9).

You can stay in this area at **Fox Hill Bed & Breakfast,** 4383 Borden Grant Trail, Fairfield, VA 24435 (✆ **800/869-8005** or 540/377-9922; www.foxhillbb.com), which sits on rolling pastureland with a fine view of the Blue Ridge about 13 miles north of Lexington. Fox Hill is no Victorian home full of frilly lace and antiques, for it was built during the 1990s as an equestrian inn. The architecture is more German than Virginian, with lots of knotty pine and a big stone fireplace in the guest lounge.

STAUNTON–TO–WARM SPRINGS VIA MONTEREY

Another scenic alternative to I-81 from Staunton to Lexington is via U.S. 250 West across the mountains into Highland County, whose rugged beauty has given it the nickname "Virginia's Switzerland." In fact, U.S. 250 from Staunton to the town of **Monterey** is one of the state's most scenic excursions. Carved out of the rocks in the early 1800s as the Staunton-Parkersburg (W. Va.) Turnpike, the two-lane highway climbs (and I do mean *climbs*) over four mountains on its way to Monterey. Don't be in a hurry: the 50-mile drive can take 1½ hours.

Plan to stop a few moments atop Shenandoah Mountain at the breastwork remains of **Confederate Fort Edward Johnson,** 25 miles west of Staunton. Rebel Gen. Edward Johnson built the fort in the winter of 1862 to protect the Shenandoah Valley from Union forces advancing from the west. It was abandoned a few months later without ever seeing action. There is an interpretive trail and a tremendous view.

Later Gen. Stonewall Jackson led his army across the mountain and won the Battle of McDowell, in the Bullpasture River valley. Today you'll pass through the village of McDowell, which explains the battle in the **Highland Museum and Heritage Center** (✆ **540/396-4478**). The museum is behind the local funeral home on U.S. 250 and is open from mid-April to mid-November Wednesday to Saturday 11am to 4pm, Sunday 1 to 4pm; rest of the year Friday and Saturday from 11am to 4pm, Sunday 1 to 4pm. Admission is free. Next door, members of the local Mennonite community sell homemade maple syrup and candy in the **Sugar Tree Country Store & Sugar House** (✆ **800/396-2445** or 540/396-3469), which still has its pot-belly stove.

Seen from U.S. 250 as it descends into the valley, Monterey's white clapboard churches and Victorian homes conjure up images of New England hamlets. At more than 2,500 feet elevation, it enjoys a refreshing, springlike climate during summer. Information is available in the Highland Inn on Main Street (see below). Stroll along Main Street (U.S.

250) past the likes of **H&H Cash Store,** a holdover from the days when general stores sold a little bit of everything. You can also poke your head into arts-and-crafts stores.

The best (and most crowded) time to be here is on the second and third full weekends in March, when Monterey hosts the **Highland Maple Festival,** one of Virginia's top annual events (see "Virginia Calendar of Events," in chapter 3). A smaller version, the **Hands and Harvest Festival,** is held on the second weekend in October.

Accommodations are available at the charming **Highland Inn,** on Main Street (✆ **888/466-4682** or 540/468-2143; fax 540/468-3143; www.highland-inn.com), a 16-unit, veranda-fronted hotel built in 1904, renovated and improved in the 1990s. The inn serves dinner Wednesday through Saturday, brunch on Sunday.

Fresh deli sandwiches and salads are available on Main Street at **Evelyn's Pantry** (✆ **540/468-3663**), where you can shop the pantry for local maple syrup and candies. It's open Monday to Saturday from 7:30am to 6pm. **High's Restaurant,** also on Main Street (✆ **540/468-1600**), serves inexpensive, down-home Southern fare Monday to Saturday from 6am to 8pm, Sunday from 7am to 6pm.

For more information contact the **Highland County Chamber of Commerce,** P.O. Box 223, Monterey, VA 24465 (✆ **540/468-2550;** fax 540/468-2551; www.highlandcounty.org). It's open Monday through Friday from 10am to 5pm.

From Monterey, U.S. 220 takes you 30 miles south through the Jackson River Valley—to my mind one of the most idyllic in Virginia—to Warm Springs (see below). From there, you can drive 42 miles across the mountains to Lexington via Va. 39 and the Goshen Pass, a marvelously scenic drive in itself.

8 WARM SPRINGS & HOT SPRINGS ★★

Hot Springs: 220 miles SW of Washington, D.C., 160 miles W of Richmond; Warm Springs: 5 miles N of Hot Springs

At temperatures from 94° to 104°F (35°–40°C), thermal springs rise in appropriately named Bath County. This little valley has been a retreat since the 18th century, when Thomas Jefferson and other notables stopped at Warm Springs to "take the waters." The Homestead was founded in 1766 and is still one of the nation's premier spas and golf resorts (it has the nation's oldest tee). After you've soaked in the waters, played the links, and had your pedicure, you can hear small ensembles making music at the Garth Newel Music Center.

Warm Springs today is a charming little hamlet that serves as the Bath County seat. The even smaller village of Hot Springs, 5 miles to the south, is virtually a company town: It lives to serve The Homestead. Hot Springs' Main Street begins where U.S. 220 circles around the resort and runs for 2 blocks south; here you'll find a deli and several upscale art and clothing dealers, some in the old train depot.

Granted, there is a whole lot of money visiting and living in this valley, including the Rev. Pat Robertson, who has a mansion up on the mountaintop. Fortunately we of the tax-paying classes don't have to spend a fortune to enjoy it for a day or two; there are relatively inexpensive places to stay and eat here.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Bath County Chamber of Commerce,** 169 Main St. (P.O. Box 718), Hot Springs, VA 24445 (✆ **800/628-8092** or 540/839-5409; www.discoverbath.com), operates a visitor center (with free Wi-Fi) on Main Street south of

 The Homestead. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 4:30pm. There's an information kiosk in Warm Springs at the Jefferson Pools, on U.S. 220 just south of the Va. 39 junction. It usually has copies of a walking-tour brochure to the little village.

GETTING THERE U.S. 220 runs north and south through Hot Springs and Warm Springs, with access to I-64 at Covington, 20 miles of winding mountain road south of Hot Springs. The scenic route is via Va. 39 from Lexington, a 42-mile drive that follows the Maury River through the canyonlike **Goshen Pass.** You can also take the scenic route from Staunton via Monterey, described earlier in this chapter.

The nearest regular air service is at **Roanoke Regional Airport** (p. 195). Clifton Forge has an **Amtrak** station (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com).

TAKING THE WATERS & CLASSICAL MUSIC ★★★

The most famous of the thermal springs are the **Jefferson Pools,** in a grove of trees in Warm Springs, just south of the intersection of U.S. 220 and Va. 39 (✆ **540/839-5346**). The crystal-clear, 98°F (37°C) waters of these natural rock pools circulate gently and offer a wonderfully relaxing experience. The octagonal white clapboard bathhouse covering the men's pool was built in 1761, and the women's building dates to 1836, and they've been little changed since. The only luxuries you'll get at the pools are a clean towel and a rudimentary changing room. Use of the pools costs $15 an hour. Reservations aren't taken for the pools—just walk in. They are open June to October daily from 10am to 7pm. Call for winter weekend hours.

There's music in the mountain air on summer weekends at the **Garth Newel Music Center,** on U.S. 220 between Warm Springs and Hot Springs (✆ **877/558-1689** or 540/839-5018; www.garthnewel.org). The center's summer-long music festival has been drawing critical acclaim since the 1970s, and concerts now go into the autumn months. Long known for classical music, it now features jazz, blues, and other varieties—all performed by small ensembles. Garth Newel also sponsors a series of Music Holiday Weekend Retreats in spring, fall, and winter. Accommodations and dining at the on-site **Manor House** are part of the package. Call, write, or check the website for details.

WHERE TO STAY

Bed-and-breakfasts include **Warm Springs Inn** (✆ **540/839-5351**), a converted courthouse across the road from the Jefferson Pools. In Hot Springs, **Vine Cottage Inn** (✆ **800/410-9755** or 540/839-2422; www.vinecottageinn.com) is a block from The Homestead.

The Homestead ★★★ With a prodigious reputation dating back to 1766, this venerable spa and golf resort has hosted presidents since Thomas Jefferson, plus innumerable social elites. Guests enter across a porch adorned with white rockers into the Great Hall, lined with 16 Corinthian columns and a 211-foot floral carpet. It's worth stopping in here just to see this magnificent room. Guests have a variety of accommodations in rooms and suites with a Virginia country-manor ambience and custom-designed mahogany furniture. Most units offer spectacular mountain views. Best are the suites in the South Wing, which have working fireplaces, private bars, sun porches, two TVs, and two phones.

In addition to three outstanding golf courses, diversions include 12 tennis courts, bowling, fishing, hiking, horseback and carriage rides, ice-skating on an Olympic-size rink, lawn bowling and croquet, billiards, sporting clays and skeet trap, and downhill and cross-country skiing mid-December to March. Then you can ease the aches and pains in

the springs-fed indoor pool or the full-service spa, which also takes advantage of the hot springs.

Under the supervision of European-trained chefs, the historic **Main Dining Room** is a lush palm court, in which an orchestra performs every evening during six-course dinners and for dancing afterward (coat and ties required after 6pm). The Homestead's signature restaurant, **The 1766 Grille,** is more casual, as is the **Casino Club.** It's all a bit rich for my plastic, but I do dine across Main Street at **Sam Snead's Tavern,** a casual pub serving traditional American fare (open for dinner only). Or you can dine at the golf clubs or at the ski slopes.

Although this large property primarily hosts conventions and other group meetings, it's still a very good family resort.

P.O. Box 2000, Hot Springs, VA 24445. ✆ **800/838-1766** or 540/839-1776. Fax 540/839-7670. www.thehomestead.com. 483 units. $175–$550 double; $350–$900 suite. 15% resort service fee added to bill. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; bikes; children's center or programs; concierge; 3 golf courses; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor and outdoor pools; room service; sauna; spa; 12 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Inn at Gristmill Square ★ (Value)

Five restored 19th-century buildings, including an old mill, make this unique hostelry in Warm Springs seem like a small village. It includes the Blacksmith Shop, which houses a country store; the Hardware Store, with seven guest units; the Steel House, with four units; the Miller's House, with four rooms; and the old silo, with two rooms. (I love the silo rooms with their curving walls.) Furnishings are period pieces, with comfortable upholstered chairs, brass chandeliers, four-poster beds, and marble-top side tables, and many units have working fireplaces. Breakfast is served in your room in a picnic basket. Other facilities include an outdoor pool and three tennis courts, and you can wade in the warm stream winding through the property. The rustic **Waterwheel Restaurant** (see "Where to Dine," below) and **Simon Kenton Pub** are cozy spots in the old mill building.

C.R. 645 (Box 359), Warm Springs, VA 24484. ✆ **540/839-2231.** Fax 540/839-5770. www.gristmillsquare.com. 16 units, 1 suite. $110–$175 double. Rates include continental breakfast. DISC, MC, V. From U.S. 220 N., turn left onto C.R. 619 and right onto C.R. 645. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Roseloe Motel (Value)

At the opposite extreme from the Homestead (but owned by it), this brick-fronted motel offers inexpensive, well-maintained, and clean rooms near the Garth Newel Music Center, between Warm Springs and Hot Springs. Four units have full kitchens, 2 have kitchenettes, and all have microwave ovens and refrigerators. It's very popular with cost-conscious leaf-watchers and deer hunters during fall, so book early.

10849 Sam Snead Hwy. (U.S. 220 N), Hot Springs, VA 24445. ✆ **540/839-5373.** Fax 540/839-4625. 14 units. $70–$85 double. AE, MC, V. From Hot Springs, go north 3 miles (4km) on U.S. 220. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, kitchen (some units).

An Unusual Country Inn

Fort Lewis Plantation & Lodge ★★ (Kids)

You'll discover one of Virginia's most remote and unusual country inns at this farm beside the Cowpasture River, across the mountain from Warm Springs. About half the guest quarters are in a reconstructed barn, from which an outside spiral staircase leads to three rooms inside the silo—I do love those round walls in old silos. One end of the rough-look barn is now a comfortable lounge with stone fireplace and large windows looking out over a Jacuzzi-equipped deck to the farmland and mountains beyond. Other guests stay in hand-hewn log cabins, each with a fireplace, or in a restored farmhouse. Activities include mountain biking, hiking,

and taking a cool dip in one of Virginia's best swimming holes (it has a rock wall on one side). You can fish for trout in the Cowpasture River, but don't count on eating your catch; you must throw it back into the river.

H.C.R. 3, Box 21A, Millboro, VA 24460. ✆ **540/925-2314.** Fax 540/925-2352. www.fortlewislodge.com. 19 units. $205 double; $220–$260 cabin. Rates include breakfast and dinner. MC, V. Closed early Nov through Mar. From Warm Springs, go 14 miles east on Va. 39, turn left on Indian Draft Rd. (C.R. 678) and drive north 11 miles, then turn left on River Rd. (C.R. 625) to entrance. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; Jacuzzi; swimming hole. *In room:* A/C.

WHERE TO DINE

Part of a gasoline station 3½ miles north of Hot Springs, **Cucci's at the Varsity** (✆ **540/839-4000**) provides inexpensive pizza, spaghetti, and other Italian fare. It's open Monday to Thursday from 11am to 10pm, Friday and Saturday 11am to 11pm.

On an alley off Main Street in Hot Springs, **Lindsay's Roost Bar and Grill** (✆ **540/839-2142**) caters to the working class with inexpensive country-style breakfasts, sandwiches, burgers, and main courses such as fried mountain trout. Open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 8pm.

Country Cafe AMERICAN I've seen the Rev. Pat Robertson munching on fried chicken here at Hot Springs' favorite country restaurant. It's good Southern fare like my mother used to cook. All is not fried, however, including the broiled, sautéed, or chargrilled mountain trout, the best meal here. Finish it off with a slice of cream pie. Beer and wine are served but not spirits.

U.S. 220 S. (1 mile south of The Homestead). ✆ **540/839-2111.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses $8–$15. MC, V. Tues–Sat 7am–9pm; Sun 8am–2pm.

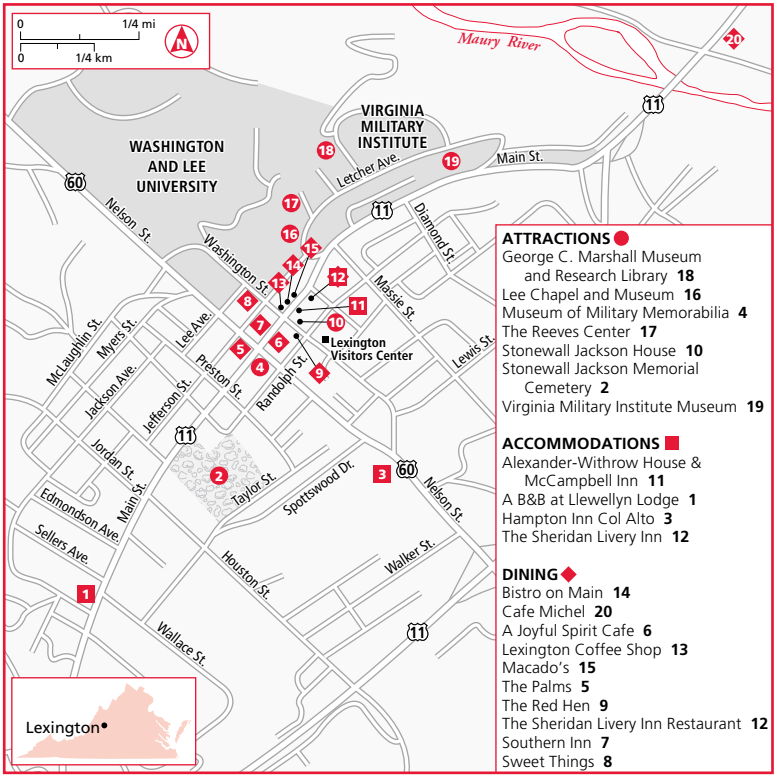
The Waterwheel Restaurant ★ INTERNATIONAL The finest dining here outside The Homestead, this charmer occupies the old mill building at the Inn at Gristmill Square in Warm Springs (see "Where to Stay," above), thus is its name derived from the huge water wheel that once powered the grist. The signature dish here is mountain trout lightly breaded with cornmeal and walnuts; it's a tasty twist on Southern cooking. There's an extensive wine cellar, from which you can partake pre- or après-meal in the tiny, one-table pub.

C.R. 645 (in Inn at Gristmill Sq.), Warm Springs. ✆ **540/839-2231.** Reservations highly recommended. Main courses $24–$29. MC, V. Daily 6–9pm. Sun brunch 11am–2pm.

9 LEXINGTON: A CHARMING COLLEGE TOWN ★★★

36 miles S of Staunton; 180 miles SW of Washington, D.C.; 138 miles W of Richmond

A college atmosphere prevails in Lexington, one of America's most charming small towns. Fine old homes line tree-shaded streets, among them the house where Stonewall Jackson lived when he taught at Virginia Military Institute. A beautifully restored downtown looks so much like it did in the 1800s that scenes for the movie *Sommersby* were filmed on Main Street (Richard Gere's character was hanged behind Stonewall's house). After the Civil War, Robert E. Lee came to Lexington to serve as president of what was then Washington College; he and his horse, Traveller, are buried here. And Gen. George C. Marshall, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for his post–World War II plan to rebuild Europe, graduated from VMI, which has a fine museum in his memory.



Washington and Lee University has one of the oldest and most beautiful campuses in the country. Built in 1824, Washington Hall is topped by a replica of an American folk art masterpiece, an 1840 carved-wood statue of George Washington. Lee reputedly planted some of the massive trees dotting the campus.

Sometimes called the West Point of the South, VMI opened in 1839 on the site of a state arsenal, abutting the Washington and Lee campus (W&L's buildings are like brick Southern manses; VMI's look like stone fortresses). The most dramatic episode in VMI's history took place during the Civil War at the Battle of New Market on May 15, 1864, when the corps of cadets helped turn back a larger Union army (p. 166). A month later, Union Gen. David Hunter got even, bombarding Lexington and burning down VMI. He spared Washington College because it was named for the first president.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Lexington & Rockbridge Area Visitor Center,** 106 E. Washington St., Lexington, VA 24450 (✆ **877/453-9822** or 540/463-3777; fax 540/463-1105; www.lexingtonvirginia.com), is a block east of Main Street. Begin your tour of Lexington at this excellent source of information, for it offers museumlike displays about the town's history, has an accommodations gallery for making same-day hotel

Fun Facts Presidential Prototype

The George C. Marshall Museum and Research Library served as the prototype for modern presidential libraries, starting with President Truman's in Independence, Missouri.

reservations, and distributes free walking-tour brochures (you can park in the center's lot while touring the town). The center is open daily from 8:30am to 6pm June through August, from 9am to 5pm the rest of the year. It's closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

GETTING THERE Lexington is at the junction of I-81 and I-64. U.S. 60 and U.S. 11 go directly into town. The nearest regular air service is at **Roanoke Regional Airport** (p. 195). Staunton has an **Amtrak** station (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com).

EXPLORING THE TOWN

Be sure to pick up a free **walking tour** brochure at the visitor center. It explains Lexington's historic buildings and contains one of the best maps of downtown.

For a good overview, take a ride with **Lexington Carriage Company** (✆ **540/463-5647**), whose horse-drawn carriages depart from the visitor center for 45-minute narrated tours daily from 10am to 6pm during the summer, from 11am to 5pm during April, May, September, and October. Fares are $16 for adults, $14 for seniors, $7 for children ages 7 to 13, free for kids 6 and under.

Haunting Tales of Historic Lexington (✆ **540/464-2250**) conducts 1½-hour nighttime walks through the streets, back alleys, and Stonewall Jackson Cemetery from Memorial Day weekend to Halloween. The cost is $12 for adults, $6 for children 4 to 12, and free for children 3 and younger. Reservations are strongly recommended, so call ahead.

During the school year, VMI cadets lead walking tours of their campus, departing the Virginia Military Institute Museum lobby daily at noon.

George C. Marshall Museum and Research Library ★★ Facing the VMI parade ground, this impressive stone structure houses the personal archives of General of the Army George C. Marshall, a 1901 graduate of VMI. As army chief of staff in World War II, Marshall virtually directed that conflict (he chose Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to command all Allied forces in Europe). After the war he served as secretary of state and secretary of defense under President Truman. He is best remembered for the Marshall Plan, which fostered the economic recovery of Western Europe after the war. For his role in promoting postwar peace, he became the first career soldier to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1956. His Nobel medal is on display. An electronic map charts the war and Marshall's decisions. Allow an hour to explore the museum on your own.

VMI Parade Grounds. ✆ **540/463-7103.** www.marshallfoundation.org. Admission to museum $5 adults, $4 seniors, free for students and children; free admission to research library. Museum Tues–Sat 9am–5pm.

Lee Chapel and Museum ★★★ This magnificent Victorian-Gothic chapel on the Washington and Lee campus was built of brick and native limestone in 1867 at the request of General Lee. Begin by walking up on the auditorium stage and taking a look at Edward Valentine's striking white-marble sculpture *Lee Recumbent.* A docent will

explain the history of the building and the intricacies of the statue, which Valentine carved between 1871 and 1875, shortly after Lee's death. Flanking it are Charles Willson Peale's 1772 portrait of George Washington wearing the uniform of a colonel in the Virginia militia, and Theodore Pine's painting of Lee in Confederate uniform. Climb down the narrow rear steps to the basement, where the remains of the general and many other members of the Lee clan (including "Light-Horse Harry" Lee of Revolutionary War fame) are entombed. Robert E. Lee's beloved horse, Traveller, is buried in a plot outside the museum. Across the vestibule, Lee's office remains just as he left it when he died on October 12, 1870. The museum is devoted to the history of the university and its two namesakes and includes the impressive Washington-Custis-Lee collection of American portraits. Allow 30 minutes to see the statue, the crypt, and Lee's office, another 30 in the museum.

Washington and Lee University. ✆ **540/458-8768.** http://chapelapps.wlu.edu. Free admission ($5 donation suggested). Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Sat 9am–4pm, Sun 1–5pm. Limited free parking on Jefferson St., opposite west end of Henry St. Follow signs from parking lot.

Museum of Military Memorabilia This small museum displays a collection of military uniforms and various bits of soldiers' gear, with the oldest dating from 1740 in Prussia and the newest from the war in Iraq. The uniforms come from several different countries and represent a number of conflicts. You'll also see insignia, flags, a few weapons, trench art from World War I, and a piece of the Berlin Wall. If you miss the beginning, you can join the 45-minute guided tours in progress.

122½ S. Main St. (in the driveway next to the Presbyterian Church). ✆ **540/464-3041.** Admission $3 per person. Apr–Oct Wed–Fri noon–5pm, Sat 9am–5pm; rest of year by appt. 45-min. tours run continuously.

The Reeves Center This former professor's residence contains a phenomenal collection of more than 4,000 pieces of hand-painted Chinese export porcelain, a gift to Washington and Lee University from Euclin and Louise Herreschoff Reeves. One of the top five such collections in the United States, the highlights are the porcelain place sets used by the Robert E. Lee family and an armorial piece commissioned by George Washington. The latter is one of several hundred pieces painted with family coats of arms. One room is devoted to displaying the works of Louise Herreschoff Reeves, an accomplished painter.

Washington and Lee University. ✆ **540/458-8034.** www.wlu.edu. Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–4pm.

Stonewall Jackson House ★★ Maj. Thomas Jonathan Jackson came to Lexington in 1851 to take a post as teacher of natural philosophy (physics) and artillery tactics at VMI. Jackson lived in this Federal-style house with his wife, Mary Anna Morrison, their daughter, and five slaves from early 1859 until he was summoned to Richmond in 1861; it was the only house he ever owned. Exhibits tell the story of the Jacksons' stay here, and many of the Jacksons' personal effects duplicate the items on the inventory of Jackson's estate made shortly after he died near Chancellorsville in 1863. His body was returned to Lexington and buried in Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery (see below). Also have a look at the backyard vegetable garden and the carriage house, which protects a Rockaway model Jackson owned.

8 E. Washington St. (btw. Main and Randolph sts.). ✆ **540/463-2552.** www.stonewalljackson.org. Admission $6 adults, $3 children 6–17, free for children 5 and younger. Mon–Sat 9am–6pm; Sun 1–6pm. Guided 30-min. tours depart on the hour and half-hour (last tour 30 min. prior to closing). Closed Jan 1, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Impressions

Let us cross the river and rest under the shade of the trees.

—Stonewall Jackson's last words, May 10, 1863

Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery An Edward Valentine statute of Jackson stands tall over the general's grave in the center of this peaceful cemetery. Jackson's two wives, his daughter, his son-in-law, and grandchildren are interred around him. Also here are the remains of 22 confederate foot soldiers and Gen. E. F. Paxton, who, like Jackson, was killed at Chancellorsville. John Mercer Brooke, who designed the Confederate ironclad *Virginia,* also known as the *Merrimac,* is here. The cemetery office, on its northern boundary, distributes a guide to the gravesites.

314 S. Main St. (at White St.). ✆ **540/436-2931.** Free admission. Daily dawn to dusk.

Virginia Horse Center Sprawling across nearly 400 acres, the Virginia Horse Center offers educational seminars and sales of fine horses, and it has a coliseum for concerts as well as horse shows. Annual events include draft pulls, rodeos, various competitions, and competitive breed shows. Call or check the website for the schedule.

Va. 39, 1 mile west of U.S. 11 and north of I-64. ✆ **540/463-7060.** www.horsecenter.org. Admission varies by event; most are free. Open year-round. From downtown, take U.S. 11 north, turn left on Va. 39 1/10 mile north of I-64; the center is 1 mile on the left.

Virginia Military Institute Museum ★★ This museum tracing VMI's history is well worth a visit, especially to see the raincoat Stonewall Jackson was wearing when his own men accidentally shot him at Chancellorsville (the bullet hole is in the upper left shoulder) and—thanks to taxidermy—Jackson's unflappable war horse, Little Sorrel. Also here is one of Gen. George S. Patton's shiny helmet liners. Patton graduated from VMI in 1907. The museum resides in the basement of **Jackson Memorial Hall,** the school's auditorium which was built in 1915 with federal funds paid in partial compensation for the Union army's burning the school after its cadets helped defeat Federal troops at the Battle of New Market in May 1864. Be sure to step into the auditorium, where B. West Clinedinst's oversize oil painting of the cadets' heroic Civil War charge looms over the stage.

Letcher Ave., VMI Parade (in Jackson Memorial Hall). ✆ **540/464-7232.** www.vmi.edu/museum. Free admission ($5 donation suggested). Daily 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Christmas week.

THE NATURAL BRIDGE ★

Thomas Jefferson called this hugely impressive limestone formation "the most sublime of nature's works . . . so beautiful an arch, so elevated, so light and springing, as it were, up to heaven." The bridge was part of a 157-acre estate Jefferson acquired in 1774 from King George III. In the early 1750s it was included in the survey of western Virginia carried out by George Washington, who carved his initials into the face of the sheer stone wall and beside Cedar Creek at the base of the gorge. This geological oddity dramatically rises 215 feet above the creek; its span is 90 feet long and spreads at its widest to 150 feet. The Monacan Indian tribes worshiped it as "the bridge of God." Today, it is also the bridge of man, as U.S. 11 passes over it.

The bridge itself and its **Monacan Indian Living History Village** definitely are worth seeing, but to my mind they are surrounded by a borderline tourist trap. That's not to

say you and the children can't eat up a day here, or that the youngsters won't thoroughly enjoy themselves in the deepest caverns on the East Coast (45-min. tours depart every 30 min.), at the toy, wax, and monster museums, as well as exploring Dinosaur Kingdom. There's also a small, independently operated zoo up the road, but you, the kids, and especially the animals will have more fun at the nearby Virginia Safari Park (see "On Safari in Virginia," below). Also here: a department store–size souvenir shop, a restaurant, and a hotel.

There are no guided tours, but there are interpreters under the bridge and in the Monacan village. The bridge is a steep ¼-mile downhill walk from the visitor center (passing the remains of a 1,500-year-old arbor vitae tree), but shuttle buses will take you down and back up. From there, the 1-mile-long **Cedar Creek Trail** descends past a cave and a waterfall. During summer, a 45-minute sound-and-light show begins at dusk beneath the bridge.

Admission to the bridge, Monacan village, the show, and the wax and toy museums is $26 for adults, $14 for children 5 to 12. Tickets without the museums cost $18 for adults, $10 for children 5 to 12. Caverns-only tickets are $14 adults, $9 for kids 5 to 12. The bridge is open daily from 8am to dusk. The attractions are open during summer daily from 8am to sunset; the rest of the year, daily from 8am to 5pm. You can see the bridge itself until dusk.

The bridge is 12 miles south of Lexington on U.S. 11 (take Exit 175 off I-81). For more information, or to book a hotel room or campsite here, contact Natural Bridge, P.O. Box 57, Natural Bridge, VA 24578 (✆ **800/533-1410** or 540/291-2121; fax 540/291-1896; www.naturalbridgeva.com).

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The Lexington & Rockbridge Area Visitor Center (see "Essentials," above) publishes a useful guide, *Rockbridge Outdoors,* which gives a complete rundown of the area's active pursuits.

An avid outdoorsman, co-host John Roberts at **Llewellyn Lodge** organizes fly-fishing trips and hiking expeditions into the nearby hills and mountains (see "Where to Stay," below).

CANOEING, KAYAKING & RAFTING The Maury River, which runs through Lexington, provides some of Virginia's best white-water rafting and kayaking, especially through

Kids On Safari in Virginia

It's a far cry from the real Serengeti Plain, but the **Virginia Safari Park** ★★★, at Exit 180 off I-81 (✆ **540/291-3205;** www.virginiasafaripark.com), has zebras, giraffes, antelopes, monkeys, emus, deer, elk, and bison among more than 700 animals roaming the hills between Lexington and Natural Bridge. There's even a petting area with goats, lambs, and pigs. The best way to see the beasts is on a 90-minute wagon ride daily at 11:30am and 3pm during summer, at 1 and 3pm on weekends during spring and autumn. At other times you merely drive your own vehicle through the park. Admission is $14 for adults, $13 for seniors, and $10 for children 3 to 12. The park is open from mid-March to Thanksgiving weekend daily 9am to 5pm.

the Goshen Pass, on Va. 39 northwest of town. The visitor center has information about several put-in spots, or you can rent equipment or go on expeditions on the Maury and James rivers with **Wilderness Canoe Company,** 631 James River Rd., Natural Bridge Station, VA 24579 (✆ **540/291-2295;** www.wildernesscanoecampground.com). Call, write, or check the website for schedules and reservations.

HIKING Two linear parks connect to offer hikers and joggers nearly 10 miles of gorgeous trail between Lexington and Buena Vista, a railroad town 7 miles to the southeast. The major link is the **Chessie Nature Trail,** which follows an old railroad bed along the Maury River between Lexington and Buena Vista. No vehicles (including bicycles) are allowed, but you can cross-country ski the trail during winter. The Chessie trail connects with a walking path in **Woods Creek Park,** which starts at the Waddell School on Jordan Street and runs down to the banks of the Maury. Both trails are open from dawn to dusk. The visitor center has maps and brochures.

There are excellent hiking, mountain-biking, horseback-riding, and all-terrain-vehicle trails in the **George Washington National Forest,** which encompasses much of the Blue Ridge Mountains east of Lexington. Small children might not be able to make it, but the rest of the family will enjoy the 3-mile trail up to **Crabtree Falls,** a series of cascades tumbling 1,200 feet down the mountain (it's the highest waterfall in Virginia). Heartier hikers can scale up to the Appalachian Trail on the mountaintop. Crabtree Falls is on Va. 56 east of the Blue Ridge Parkway; from Lexington, go north on I-81 to Steeles Tavern (Exit 205), then east on Va. 56.

SHOPPING

Lexington's charming 19th-century downtown offers more than a dozen interesting shops and art galleries, most of them on Main Street and on the blocks of Washington and Nelson streets between Main and Jefferson streets. Among the best is **Artists in Cahoots,** a cooperative venture run by local artists and craftspeople in the Alexander-Witherow House, at the corner of Main and Washington streets (✆ **540/464-1147**). It features an outstanding selection of paintings, sculptures, wood and metal crafts, hand-painted silk scarves, handblown glass, Shaker-style furniture, photographs, prints, decoys, stained glass, and jewelry. **Virginia Born & Bred,** 16 W. Washington St. (✆ **540/463-1832**), has made-in-Virginia gifts. Collectibles hunters will find an amazing array of old and not-so-old stuff literally stuffed into **The Second Hand Shop,** 7 S. Jefferson St. (✆ **540/463-7559**), between Washington and Nelson streets.

WHERE TO STAY

Wherever you choose to stay, rooms will be difficult to find, and rates will be highest, during football weekends, graduation, and other activities at Washington and Lee University and at Virginia Military Institute, as well as during major shows at the Virginia Horse Center.

Lexington has several chain motels, especially at the intersection of U.S. 11 and I-64 (Exit 55), 1½ miles north of downtown. The 100-unit **Best Western Inn at Hunt Ridge,** 25 Willow Springs Rd./Va. 39 (✆ **800/464-1501** or 540/464-1500), is the only full-service hotel among them, offering a restaurant, bar, limited room service, indoor-outdoor pool, and fine mountain views. Try to get one of its six rooms with balconies.

Other nearby motels are **Comfort Inn** (✆ 800/628-1956 or 540/463-7311), **Country Inn & Suites** (✆ 800/456-4000 or 540/464-9000), **Econo Lodge** (✆ 800/446-6900 or 540/463-7371), **Holiday Inn Express** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 540/463-7351), and **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 540/463-7858).

Hampton Inn Col Alto ★★ This is no ordinary Hampton Inn: Col Alto is an 1827 manor house built on a plantation then on the outskirts of town. The carefully renovated mansion now houses 10 bedrooms comparable to deluxe country inns or B&Bs. An interior designer individually decorated these luxurious quarters with made-in-Virginia linens and reproduction antiques. Accommodations range from huge, light-filled rooms on the front of the house to smaller, more private ones in the rear. One unit even has a semi-round "fan" window of the style favored by Thomas Jefferson. Manor house guests can choose to have breakfast and the morning newspaper delivered to their rooms. Rooms in the L-shaped motel wing are somewhat larger than average and have microwave ovens, coffeemakers, robes, and irons and ironing boards; some have balconies overlooking a courtyard with outdoor swimming pool and whirlpool. Guests in both wings get complimentary breakfasts in the original dining room.

401 E. Nelson St., Lexington, VA 24450. ✆ **800/426-7866** or 540/463-2223. Fax 540/463-9707. www.hamptoninnlexington.com. 86 units. $139–$169 double motel room; $215–$265 double manor house. Rates include breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Health club; Jacuzzi; pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

The Sheridan Livery Inn This downtown inn occupies a large barn-size structure built in 1887 by John Sheridan to house his stable and carriage business. The architecture has dictated spacious rooms, very high ceilings, tall windows, and 25 steps leading to the second floor (there is no elevator, so request a first-level unit if you have trouble climbing stairs). Although traditional furniture creates comfort and elegance in the units, this is not an antiques-laden inn. Seven of the 12 units have both a queen- and full-size bed, while two others have a king bed and sofa. Three suites have separate living rooms with sleeper sofas, and two of these also have tiny wrought-iron balconies. There are no public areas here; instead, guests are diverted to the **Sheridan Inn Restaurant** (see below).

35 N. Main St., Lexington, VA 24450. ✆ **540/464-1887.** Fax 540/464-1817. www.sheridanliveryinn.com. 12 units. $100–$170 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (in 2 suites), hair dryer, Wi-Fi (in most units).

Historic Country Inns

Make reservations for Alexander-Witherow House, McCampbell Inn, and Maple Hall through **Historic Country Inns of Lexington,** 11 N. Main St., Lexington, VA 24450 (✆ **877/283-9680** or 540/463-2044; fax 540/463-7262; www.lexingtonhistoricinns.com).

Alexander-Witherow House and McCampbell Inn ★ The Alexander-Witherow House is a lovely late Georgian town house built in 1789 as a family residence over a store. Accommodations are all homey suites with separate living rooms and small kitchens. Comfortable furnishings include wing chairs, four-poster beds, and hooked rugs on wide-board floors. The McCampbell Inn, across Main Street, houses the main office for Historic Country Inns; guests at both hostelries eat breakfast here. Begun in 1809, with later additions in 1816 and 1857, it occupies a rambling building, with rooms facing both Main Street and the quieter back courtyard. Furnishings are a pleasant mix of antiques and reproductions; all units have wet bars and refrigerators, and one of the suites has a Jacuzzi.

11 N. Main St. ✆ **877/283-9680** or 540/463-2044. Fax 540/463-7262. www.lexingtonhistoricinns.com. 15 units, 8 suites. $155 double; $165–$195 suite. Rates include extensive continental breakfast. DISC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (some units).

Maple Hall ★ Set on 56 rolling acres 6 miles north of Lexington, this handsome redbrick, white-columned 1850 plantation house offers a restful retreat. Old boxwoods surround the inn, which consists of a main house, the restored Guest House, and the Pond House. Rooms are individually furnished—many with antiques, Oriental rugs, and massive Victorian pieces; 10 units have gas fireplaces. The Guest House has a living room, kitchen, and three bedrooms with bathrooms. The Pond House, added in 1990, contains four suites and two mini-suites. Guests relax on the shaded patio, on porches with rocking chairs, and on back verandas overlooking the fishing pond and nearby hills. A pool, tennis court, and 3-mile hiking trail are on-site. Elegant dining in pretty garden-like surroundings attracts a good following to the fine-dining **Maple Hall Restaurant,** which is open daily for dinner.

3111 N. Lee Hwy. (U.S. 11), Lexington, VA 24450. ✆ **877/283-9680** or 540/463-6693. Fax 540/463-2114. www.lexingtonhistoricinns.com. 21 units. $95–$145 double; $150–$185 suite/Guest House. Rates include breakfast. DISC, MC, V. Take U.S. 11 for 6 miles north of town; house is near Exit 195 off I-81. **Amenities:** Restaurant; outdoor pool; tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen (in Guest House).

Bed & Breakfasts

In addition to the one mentioned below, Lexington has several other B&Bs; the visitor center offers a complete list.

A B&B at Llewellyn Lodge ★ Value A brick Colonial-style house, John and Ellen Roberts' Llewellyn Lodge is within easy walking distance of all of Lexington's historic sites. On the first floor are a cozy sitting room with working fireplace and a TV room. Guest rooms are decorated in exceptionally attractive color schemes. All rooms have ceiling fans, and four have TVs. A screened gazebo out back has a fan, too. Co-host John has hiked just about every trail and fished every stream in the Blue Ridge Mountains; he organizes fly-fishing and hiking expeditions (see "Outdoor Activities," above).

603 S. Main St., Lexington, VA 24450. ✆ **800/882-1145** or 540/463-3235. Fax 540/463-3235. www.llodge.com. 6 units (all with bathroom). $79–$189 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV (in 4 rooms), Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

When my sweet tooth starts aching while I'm walking around town, I stop at **Sweet Things,** 106 W. Washington St., between Jefferson Street and Lee Avenue (✆ **540/463-6055**), for a cone or cup of "designer" ice cream or frozen yogurt. It's open Monday through Thursday noon to 9:30pm, Friday and Saturday noon to 10pm, and Sunday 2 to 9:30pm.

The **Lexington Coffee Shop,** 9 W. Washington St. (✆ **540/464-6586**), is a quintessential, college-town coffeehouse with a selection of exotic brews plus bagels and pastries. It's open Monday through Friday 7am to 5:30pm, Saturday 8am to 5pm, and Sunday 8am to 3pm.

At the **Red Hen,** 11 E. Washington St. (✆ **540/464-4401;** www.redhenlex.com), chef Tucker Yoder has won raves for dishes like seared trout with turnips, spatzle, apples, and brown butter. It's open for dinner Tuesday to Saturday 5 to 9pm.

You can't miss noticing **Macado's,** 30 N. Main St. (✆ **540/463-8200**), occupying the Willson-Walker House, an 1820 Greek Revival building with big front porches both upstairs and down and formerly home to one of the Shenandoah's finest restaurants. It's an incongruous home for this casual and often noisy sports bar. It's open daily 8pm to 1am.

Bistro on Main ★ Finds AMERICAN High-quality photographs—all for sale—decorate the walls of this storefront bistro offering a mix of cuisines. A light-fare list ranging from burgers to a vegetarian ratatouille is available after 9pm, while the wide-ranging regular dinner menu offers shrimp and grits in a low-country wine-and-cream sauce, chicken or steak fajitas, grilled New York steak, and vegetarian grilled Portobello mushrooms with tomato, spinach, and Monterrey jack with a roasted pepper sauce. I was not impressed by the crab cakes.

8 N. Main St. ✆ **540/464-4888.** www.bistro-lexington.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $13–$24; light fare $9–$12. MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–9pm (light fare to 10pm Tues–Thurs, to 11pm Fri–Sat).

Cafe Michel ★★ FRENCH/ITALIAN French-born Michel Galand came to this country as a chef at The Homestead (p. 176) and operated a restaurant in Clifton Forge before moving to Lexington and opening this fine establishment. Peach-colored walls, faux Roman columns, and lots of plants make it seem like a south-of-France outpost on a hill north of downtown. A relaxed atmosphere prevails, even though it's one of Lexington's favorite special-event restaurants. (The Rev. Pat Robertson was fine dining down here the night after I saw him gnawing on a chicken leg at the Country Cafe in Hot Springs.) The meat or seafood mixed grills are very good, as is Michel's seafood Provençal, but a majority of dishes here are Italian.

640 N. Lee Hwy. ✆ **540/464-4119.** www.michelcafe.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $13–$23. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5–9pm; Fri–Sat 5–10pm.

A Joyful Spirit Cafe Finds DELI This bright, lively, order-at-the-counter restaurant is the best place in town for hot coffee and pastries for breakfast and creative sandwiches with a joyful combination of flavors for lunch. Bagels with salmon, cream cheese, and capers are available all day. If you're lucky you can claim one of the two tables out on the sidewalk.

26 S. Main St. ✆ **540/463-4191.** Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $2.50–$7; sandwiches and salads $3.50–$7. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 9am–3pm; Sat 10am–3pm; Sun 11am–3pm.

The Palms AMERICAN With neon palms in its storefront window, this popular pub draws town and gown alike with its substantial (if uninspired) fare, sports TVs, and friendly bar. At lunch or dinner, the hearty burgers will not disappoint. Deli sandwiches run the gamut from roast beef to smoked turkey. Dinner entrees include choices like baby back ribs, in-house cut steaks, steamed shrimp, and pastas. The building was constructed in 1836 as a debating hall and public library. You can still get into lively debates at the friendly bar.

101 W. Nelson St. ✆ **540/463-7911.** Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches, burgers, and salads $5–$9; main courses $7.50–$18. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–1am; Sun noon–11pm.

The Sheridan Livery Inn Restaurant AMERICAN Other than Macado's sports bar (see above), the big covered patio of this restaurant at the rear of the Sheridan Livery Inn is downtown's only place with outdoor dining. The kitchen had been limping along until young chef Franky Benincasa (son of co-owners Ugo and Gina Benincasa) and his wife, Meredith, sold their restaurant in Charlottesville and returned home to take over here. Frankie's main courses are best when he's cooking in the South Carolina Low Country style, such as shrimp and sausage over cheese grits. My grilled rainbow trout was accompanied by braised collards over hopping John (that's black-eyed peas and rice to you Yankees) that was so tasty I was tempted to ask for it as a main course. Sandwiches, burgers, and salads are available all day.

 In The Sheridan Livery Inn, 35 N. Main St. ✆ **540/464-1887.** www.sheridanliveryinn.com. Sandwiches $7.50–$13; main courses $16–$26. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–9pm.

Southern Inn ★ AMERICAN Crisp linen adorns the plain wooden booths at this former down-home-style Southern restaurant (note the brass coat hooks between the booths and the 1950s neon sign out front). You can order excellent sandwiches such as Dijon and tarragon chicken salad, and the regular menu features comfort food such as an excellent rendition of Mom's meatloaf, but the real stars here are specials like sea scallops sautéed with garlic and herb butter, and braised lamb shanks with herb risotto. There's an excellent wine list featuring Virginia vintages. The small but lively pub next door serves the same fare and attracts a more affluent crowd than The Palms (see above).

37 S. Main St. ✆ **540/463-3612.** Reservations recommended. Sandwiches $8–$9; main courses $10–$32. AE, MC, V. Mon–Tues 5–10pm; Wed–Sat 11:30am–10pm; Sun 11:30am–9pm.

LEXINGTON AFTER DARK

The ruins of an old limestone kiln provide the backdrop for the open-air **Theater at Lime Kiln ★★** on Borden Road off U.S. 60 W. (✆ **800/594-TIXX** [8499] or 540/436-7088; www.theateratlimekiln.com), which presents musicals, plays, and concerts from March through September.

You can joint W&L students and faculty for famous visiting artists in concerts, plays, and recitals in the **Lenfest Center for the Performing Arts,** on the W&L campus (✆ **540/458-8000;** http://lenfest.wlu.edu). The schedule is released prior to each school year.

You can also relive the 1950s at **Hull's Drive-In,** 4 miles north of downtown on U.S. 11 (✆ **540/436-2621;** www.hullsdrivein.com), one of the nation's few remaining outdoor movie theaters. It shows double features Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights from April through October.

Roanoke & the Southwest Highlands

You soon notice after leaving the art-loving, railroad-oriented city of Roanoke that I-81 begins climbing into the mountains as it heads into the Southwest Highlands, Virginia's increasingly narrow "tail" hemmed in by West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina. You don't come down on the other side of the mountains, however, for I-81 will deposit you instead in the Great Valley of Virginia, whose floor averages 2,000 feet in altitude. Just as they delineate the Shenandoah Valley, the Blue Ridge Mountains form the eastern boundary of the Southwest Highlands. And just as the Skyline Drive follows the crest of those mountains east of the Shenandoah, here it's the Blue Ridge Parkway.

I should say the parkway follows the mountains, not their crest, for while peaks above 4,000 feet are rare in the Shenandoah National Park, here they regularly exceed that altitude, with Mount Rogers reaching 5,729 feet, the highest point in Virginia.

Mount Rogers National Recreation Area rivals the Shenandoah National Park with 300 miles of hiking and riding trails, including a stretch of the Appalachian Trail. On its edges, the Virginia Creeper and New River trails take hikers and bikers along old railroad beds.

The region's history includes Daniel Boone following the Wilderness Road through the mountains, plateaus, and hollows to Cumberland Gap and on into Kentucky. Gorgeous Abingdon and other small towns still have log cabins from those frontier days.

The Highlanders have preserved their traditional arts, crafts, and renowned mountain music. Abingdon hosts both Virginia's official state theater and the Virginia Highlands Festival, one of America's top annual arts-and-crafts shows. The famous Carter family makes mountain music at tiny Maces Spring, and fiddlers from around the world gather every August for their old-time convention at Galax.

Whether you love history, drama, music, arts, crafts, the great outdoors, or all of the above, I am sure you will be enchanted with Virginia's beautiful Southwest Highlands.

1 EXPLORING THE SOUTHWEST HIGHLANDS

VISITOR INFORMATION

A one-stop source for regional information is the **Blue Ridge Travel Association Visitor Center,** 975 Tazewell St., Wytheville, VA 24382 (✆ **800/446-9670** or 276/223-3355; www.virginiablueridge.org), which shares space with the Wytheville Convention and Visitors Bureau. It offers brochures from all towns in the region. The center is open daily from 8am to 5pm. Take Exit 70 off I-81 and follow the signs.

GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

As is true in most parts of Virginia, traveling by **car** is the only way to go. Truck-infested I-81 runs the entire length of the highlands and is its major thoroughfare. U.S. 11 follows I-81, and the Blue Ridge Parkway parallels it to the east. I-77 cuts north-south through the center of the region (the section from Wytheville north to Bluefield, West Virginia, is one of America's most scenic interstates). Otherwise, most byways in the region are mountain roads—narrow, winding, and sometimes steep—so give yourself ample time to reach your destination.

The area's air gateway is **Roanoke Regional Airport** (see "Getting There," in section 3 of this chapter). The nearest **Amtrak** (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) stations are in Lynchburg and Clifton Forge, each about 50 miles from Roanoke.

2 THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY ★

Maintained by the National Park Service, the Blue Ridge Parkway, in effect, is a continuation of the 105-mile-long Skyline Drive in the Shenandoah National Park, running another 469 miles southwest through the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. Magnificent vistas and the natural beauty of the forests, wildlife, and wildflowers combine with pioneer history to make this a scenic and fascinating route.

Unlike the Skyline Drive, which is surrounded by a national park, the parkway runs through mountain meadows, farmland, and forests (some, but not all, national forests) for most of its route. Nature hikes, camping, and other activities are largely confined to the visitor centers and to more than 200 overlooks. There are about 100 **hiking trails** along the route, including the Appalachian Trail, which follows the parkway from Mile 0 to about Mile 103.

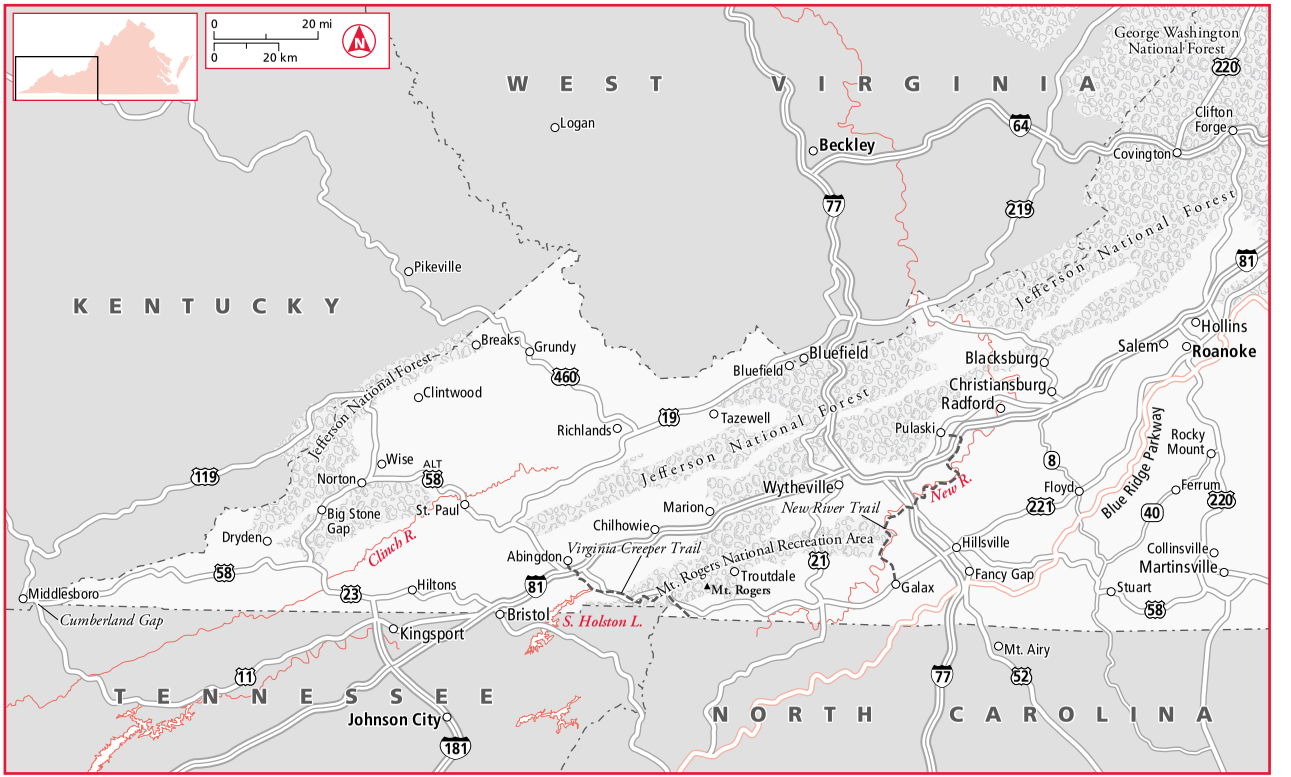
In Virginia, the 62-mile stretch between Otter Creek and Roanoke Mountain is the most scenic part. It crosses the James River Gorge and climbs Apple Orchard Mountain, the highest parkway point in Virginia (elev. 3,950 ft.). At times, the road here follows the ridgeline, rendering spectacular views down both sides of the mountains at once. It also passes the peaceful Peaks of Otter Lodge, the only hotel actually on the parkway (p. 194).

South of Roanoke, the parkway runs through lower country, with more meadows and less mountain scenery.

JUST THE FACTS

ACCESS POINTS & ORIENTATION Unlike the Skyline Drive, which has only four entry points, you can get on and off the Blue Ridge Parkway at numerous places. The northern entrance is at the southern end of the Skyline Drive, near Waynesboro on U.S. 250 at Exit 99 off I-64. The major access points in Virginia are U.S. 60 east of Buena Vista; U.S. 501 between Buena Vista and Lynchburg (Otter Creek and the James River Gorge); U.S. 460, Va. 24, U.S. 220, and the Mill Mountain Spur near Roanoke; U.S. 58 at Meadows of Dan; and I-77 at Fancy Gap. You can also get up here from Buchanan or Bedford via Va. 43, but note that trucks are not permitted on the very steep portion of Va. 43 between Buchanan and the parkway.

Mile Posts on the west side of the parkway begin with Mile 0 at the northern Rockfish Gap entry and increase as you head south. The North Carolina border is at Mile 218.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Pikeville
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Tazewell
Bluefield
Bluefield
Blacksburg
Christiansburg
Radford
Pulaski
Salem
Roanoke
Hollins
Clifton Forge
Covington
Rocky Mount
Ferrum
Floyd
Blue Ridge Parkway
Wise
Norton
Big Stone Gap
St. Paul
Dryden
Middlesboro
Cumberland Gap
Clinch R.
Wytheville
Marion
Chilhowie
Abingdon
Virginia Creeper Trail
New River Trail
New R.
Hillsville
Fancy Gap
Galax
Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area
Troutdale
Mt. Rogers
Collinsville
Martinsville
Stuart
Hiltons
Bristol
S. Holston L.
Kingsport
Johnson City
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Fun Facts **Happy 75th!**

The Blue Ridge Parkway turns 75 years old in 2010. The road was conceived during the Great Depression as both a source of jobs and as a link between the country's two newest national parks, Shenandoah in Virginia and Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. Construction began in 1935 and took 33 years to complete. For a list of birthday parties and other commemorative activities, go to www.blueridgeparkway75.org.

INFORMATION For general information, contact the **National Park Service (NPS),** 199 Hemphill Knob Rd., Asheville, NC 28801 (✆ **828/298-0398;** www.nps.gov/blri). Ask for a copy of the NPS's brochure with an excellent map of the parkway and the *Parkway Milepost,* a quarterly tabloid newspaper with articles about the parkway and a schedule of events. Both are available at the visitor centers, which also sell books about the parkway.

You can also get an information packet, including a copy of the indispensable *Blue Ridge Parkway Directory & Travel Planner,* from the **Blue Ridge Parkway Association,** P.O. Box 2136, Asheville, NC 28802-2136 (✆ **828/298-0398;** www.blueridgeparkway.org).

EMERGENCIES Call the National Park Service at ✆ **800/727-5928** in case of emergencies anywhere along the parkway.

FEES, REGULATIONS & BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS There is no fee for using the parkway. The maximum speed limit is 45 mph in rural areas, 35 mph in built-up zones. Bicycles are allowed on paved roads and parking areas, not on any trails. Camping is permitted in designated areas (see "Camping," below). Fires are permitted in campgrounds and picnic areas only. Hunting is prohibited. Pets must be kept on a leash. No swimming is allowed in parkway ponds and lakes.

VISITOR CENTERS Several visitor centers along the parkway are the focal points of most visitor activities, including ranger programs. Operated by the town of Waynesboro, the **Rockfish Gap Visitor Center** (✆ **540/943-5187;** www.waynesboro.va.us), at the northern end (Mile 0), is open year-round. Others are closed from November to March. Hours for all are 9am to 5pm daily. Here's a rundown heading south:

- **Humpback Rocks Visitor Center** (Mile 5.8) has picnic tables, restrooms, and a self-guiding trail to a reconstructed mountain homestead.
- **James River Visitor Center** (Mile 63.6), near U.S. 501 northwest of Lynchburg, is worth a stop. It has a footbridge that crosses the river to the restored canal locks, exhibits, and a nature trail. The nearby Otter Creek wayside has a daytime restaurant and campground.
- **Peaks of Otter** ★★ (Mile 86), at Va. 43 northwest of Bedford, is the most picturesque visitor center. It has a 2-mile hike to the site of a historic farm, wildlife and Native American exhibits, restrooms, and the Peaks of Otter Lodge (p. 194), which sits beside a gorgeous lake wedged between two cone-shaped mountains—the Peaks of Otter. A trail leads to the top of Sharp Top, the taller of the two at 3,875 feet. Weather permitting, **Sharp Top Bus** runs to within 1,500 feet of the peak. It's a strenuous 1.6-mile hike to the summit, so allow 2½ hours for the total excursion.

Needless to say, wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. The bus runs from May 30 through October daily every hour on the hour from 10am to 4pm. Buy your tickets and water at the camp store (✆ **540/586-1614**) beside the visitor center. Round trip fares are $8 for adults, $6 for children younger than 13.

- **Virginia's Explore Park** (Mile 115) is on the grounds of a former living history museum on the outskirts of Roanoke.
- **Rocky Knob** (Mile 167), southeast of Va. 8, has some 15 miles of hiking trails (including the Rock Castle Gorge National Recreational Trail), a comfort station, and a picnic area.
- **Mabry Mill** (Mile 176), between Va. 8 and U.S. 58, has a picturesque gristmill with a giant wheel spanning a little stream. Displays of pioneer life, including crafts demonstrations, are featured and the restored mill still grinds flour. A restaurant, open May through October, adjoins it.

SEASONS The parkway is at its best during spring, when the wildflowers bloom and leaves are multihued green, and during mid-October, when changing leaves are at their blazing best (and traffic is at its heaviest). Winter is not a good time because most facilities are closed, and snow, ice, and fog can close the road.

ON THE WINE TRAIL At Mile 171.5, between Va. 8 and U.S. 58 north of Mabry Mill, you can turn off on C.R. 726 and follow the signs to **Chateau Morrisette** (✆ **540/593-2865;** www.chateaumorrisette.com), one of the three largest vineyards in Virginia. It produces Black Dog and Our Dog Blue, two of the state's best-known red wines. It's open for tastings and sales Monday through Thursday 10am to 5pm, Friday and Saturday 10am to 6pm, and Sunday 11am to 5pm. A restaurant is open for lunch Wednesday through Sunday from April through December, Friday and Saturday from January through March. It serves dinner on Friday and Saturday all year.

MOUNTAIN MUSIC At Mile 213, the **Blue Ridge Music Center** (✆ **276/236-5309;** www.blueridgemusiccenter.org) celebrates fiddle and banjo music of the sort you can hear at the annual Old Time Fiddlers Convention in Galax, 6 miles to the north (see "Virginia Calendar of Events," in chapter 3). The center is open daily from 9am to 7pm in summer, Wednesday through Sunday 9am to 5pm in spring and autumn. It's closed from November through April. You can stop here during summer and hear mountain music Sunday through Thursday from 10am to 4pm. The center also hosts nighttime concerts by local musicians in its amphitheater.

CAMPING

The visitor centers at **Otter Creek,** Mile 61 (✆ **804/299-5125**); **Peaks of Otter,** Mile 86 (✆ **540/586-4357**); **Roanoke Mountain,** Mile 120 (✆ **540/982-9242**); and **Rocky Knob,** Mile 167 (✆ **540/745-9664**), all have campgrounds. The **Roanoke Mountain campground** is actually on Mill Mountain, about 1 mile west of the parkway above Roanoke (see section 3).

Campgrounds are open from about May 1 to early November, depending on weather conditions. Drinking water and restrooms are available, but shower and laundry facilities are not. There are tent and trailer sites, but none have utility connections. Sites cost $16 a night. America the Beautiful senior pass holders get a 50% discount. Daily permits are valid only at the campground where purchased.

Cabins are available at **Rocky Knob Cabins,** Meadows of Dan, VA 24120 (✆ **540/593-3903**).

Peaks of Otter Lodge ★ (Value) Split-rail fences and small footbridges add to the picturesque beauty of this serene, lakeside lodge nestled in a gorgeous valley between the two Peaks of Otter. On a grassy slope overlooking the lake, accommodations are in motel-like units a 600- to 900-foot walk from the main building (bring an umbrella and insect repellent). Virtually identical, the rooms have private balconies or terraces to maximize the splendid view. Only the lodge rooms equipped for guests with disabilities have TVs or phones (Roanoke folk come up here to literally get away from it all). Reservations are accepted beginning October 1 for the *following* year's fall foliage season. The casual, family-style Lakeview Restaurant is open daily from 7:30am to 8:30pm. The parkway's Peaks of Otter visitor center, with its ranger programs and shuttle bus up Sharp Top Mountain, is within walking distance (see "Just the Facts," above).

Milepost 86 (P.O. Box 489), Bedford, VA 24523. ✆ **800/542-5927** or 540/586-1081. Fax 540/586-4420. www.peaksofotter.com. 63 units. $90–$140 double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, no phone (except units equipped for persons w/disabilities).

3 ROANOKE: CITY BELOW A STAR ★

54 miles SW of Lexington; 74 miles NE of Wytheville; 193 miles SW of Richmond; 251 miles SW of Washington, D.C.

Sprawling across the floor of the Roanoke Valley and surrounded by mountains, Virginia's largest metropolitan area west of Richmond likes to call itself the "Capital of the Blue Ridge." It's also known as "Star City," for the huge lighted star overlooking the city from Mill Mountain, which stands between it and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

There was no star on the mountain when Colonial explorers followed the Roanoke River gorge through the Blue Ridge Mountains in the 18th century. They established several settlements in the Roanoke Valley, including one named Big Lick. When the Norfolk and Western Railroad arrived in the 1880s and laid out a town for future development, it decided that *Roanoke*—a Native American word for "shell money"—was a more prosperous-sounding name for the new city.

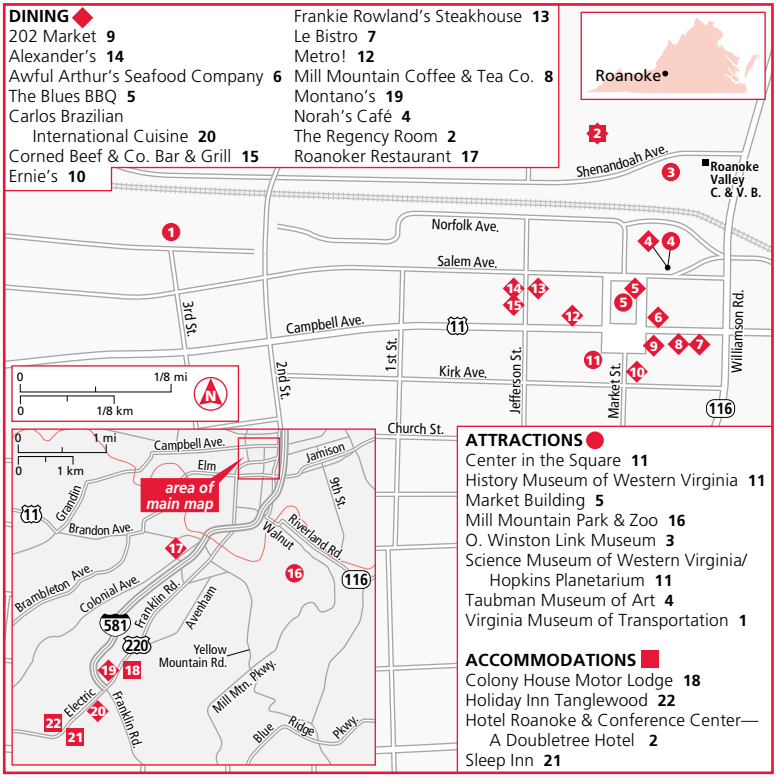
Roanoke is still a major railroad junction, as the busy tracks cutting through downtown will attest. It honors this iron-horse heritage at two excellent museums, one full of extraordinary photographs capturing the last days of the steam locomotive, the other displaying steam engines, cabooses, and other railway cars from that bygone era. An informative "Railwalk" follows the tracks between the two museums. I haven't been to all railroad museums in this country, but when seen together, surely these two are among the very best.

Nearby is the ultra-modern Taubman Museum of Art, the newest addition to a downtown which launched itself on a renaissance long before Norfolk and other Virginia cities undertook to reclaim their central areas. Notable to visitors is the restored Market Square, where farmers still sell fresh produce—and everyone else comes to wine and dine.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

Contact the **Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau,** 101 Shenandoah Ave. NE, Roanoke, VA 24016 (✆ **800/635-5535** or 540/342-6025; fax 540/342-7119; www.visitroanokeva.com), in the restored Norfolk & Western Railway Passenger Station (which it shares with the O. Winston Link Museum; p. 196). The station sits across the



tracks from Market Square in front of the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center. The bureau's visitor center is the best place to pick up maps and brochures for walking and biking tours before starting to explore Roanoke, and you can make same-day hotel reservations here. Be sure to watch the 8-minute video about the valley and go behind the staff desk for a look at a one-eighth-scale model of steam locomotive No. 1218. The center is open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Getting There

BY PLANE **Roanoke Regional Airport (ROA; ✆ 540/362-1999;** www.roanokeairport.com), 5½ miles northwest of downtown off Hershberger Road (Exit 3E off I-581), is served by Allegiant, Delta, United, and US Airways. The major car-rental units have booths on-site. **Roanoke Airport Transportation Service** (✆ **800/228-1958** or 540/345-7710) runs vans to downtown and to Blacksburg and to other highland points as far away as Abingdon (see section 5) and throughout the Shenandoah Valley (see chapter 8). If you're not in a hurry, you can catch the **Smartway Bus** (✆ **800/388-7005** or 540/982-6622; www.smartwaybus.com), an express service that stops at the airport

nine times a day Monday through Saturday on its way between Roanoke and Blacksburg. One-way fare to downtown is $3.

BY CAR From I-81, take I-581 (Exit 143) south into the heart of Roanoke. I-581 becomes U.S. 220; together, they form an expressway through town. The Blue Ridge Parkway runs along the top of the mountains east of the city; the major Roanoke exits are at U.S. 460, Va. 24, the Mill Mountain Spur Road (at Mile 120), and U.S. 220.

BY TRAIN The nearest **Amtrak** (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) stations are at Lynchburg and Clifton Forge, each about 50 miles from Roanoke.

Getting Around

Yellow Cab (✆ **540/345-7711**) is the largest taxi company here. **Valley Metro** (✆ **540/982-2222;** www.valleymetro.com) provides public bus service Monday through Saturday from 5:45am to 8:45pm. The downtown transfer point is Campbell Court, 17 W. Campbell Ave. The visitor center distributes free Ride Guide route maps.

EXPLORING MARKET SQUARE

Market Square, in the center of downtown at Market Street and Campbell Avenue, is Roanoke's answer to Alexandria's Old Town and Richmond's Shockoe Slip. As they have for more than a century, stands and shops at the **Historic City Market** display plants, flowers, fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and eggs, and farm-cured meats (Sat morning is the best time to visit). Nearby, restored Victorian-era storefronts house an eclectic mix of trendy restaurants, gift shops, art galleries, antiques dealers, an Orvis outdoor-wear, and pawnshops.

Built of redbrick in 1922, the **Market Building** now houses a food court offering the downtown lunch crowd an inexpensive international menu. The market and food court are open Monday through Saturday.

Center in the Square, once the Shenandoah Hotel on Market Square at Campbell Avenue (✆ **540/342-5700;** www.centerinthesquare.org), has been home to the History Museum of Western Virginia and the Science Museum of Western Virginia. I heard through the grapevine that plans may be underway to revamp the center, so it could be closed for extensive renovation.

An enclosed walkway leads over the railroad tracks from Market Square to the visitor center and the O. Winston Link Museum, both in the city's restored train station. It sits in front of the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, itself a sightseeing attraction (p. 199).

Also from Market Square, you can follow the **David S. and Susan S. Goode Railwalk** beside the tracks to the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

O. Winston Link Museum ★★★ In the restored Norfolk & Western railway station, this marvelous museum is devoted to the extraordinary black-and-white railroad photography of the late O. Winston Link. Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1914 of parents who hailed from Virginia and West Virginia, Link took his first photos of N&W locomotives in 1955 while on another assignment in Staunton. For the next 5 years, he traced the railroad's tracks, taking thousands of pictures of smoking locomotives just before diesel-powered models put an end to the era of steam. His most dramatic shots came at night. The museum, which he helped design, is both art gallery and railroad museum, for many items such as an original 1930s gasoline pump and parts of a country store are on display in front of the photos in which they appear. This juxtaposition of art and history makes this one of the most fascinating museums in Virginia. It's a must-see

Fun Facts "The Father of Industrial Design"

Built in 1905, Roanoke's Norfolk & Western train station not only houses the visitor center and the O. Winston Link Museum, but it's also home to the **Raymond Loewy Gallery.** Known as "the father of industrial design," Loewy remodeled the station in 1949 but is better known for the slenderized Coca-Cola bottle, the Studebaker Avanti automobile, and logos for Exxon, Shell, and Nabisco, all displayed here. Free admission; open daily 9am to 5pm.

for railroad buffs—and everyone else with an interest in photography. You'll need 30 minutes to watch a video about Link's life and at least another hour to tour the exhibits. Come here first, and then follow the **David S. and Susan S. Goode Railwalk** along the tracks to the actual locomotives and railway cars on display at the Virginia Museum of Transportation (see below).

101 Shenandoah Ave. (in old train station). ✆ **540/982-5465.** www.linkmuseum.org. Admission $5 adults, $4.50 seniors, $4 children 3–11, free for children 2 and younger. Includes admission to History Museum of Western Virginia. Combination tickets with Virginia Museum of Transportation $10 adults, $8 seniors, $6 children 3–11, free for children 2 and younger. Mar–Dec daily 10am–5pm; Jan–Feb Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm.

Taubman Museum of Art ★★ Opened in 2008, this striking structure of metal and glass stands in stark contrast to the redbrick facades dominating downtown Roanoke. It was designed by Los Angeles–based architect Randall Stout, who said he wanted to "evoke rolling mountains in the roof forms, river gorges in the circulation zones, and rock strata in the facades." Some traditional-minded Roanokers probably see no more mountains and river gorges than some Sydney residents see sails in their famed opera house Down Under. Those local controversies notwithstanding, the building itself is worth a visit. Inside, children will enjoy the interactive Art Venture, where they can perform in their own puppet show. Upstairs, the Fralin Center for American Art hosts visiting exhibitions and houses the museum's own collection, including John Singer Sargent's 1888 portrait of Mrs. George Gribble, more affectionately known as "Norah"—for which the museum named its fine cafe (p. 201). The museum's store is excellent.

110 Salem Ave. ✆ **540/342-5760.** www.taubmanmuseum.org. Admission $11 adults, $9 seniors, $8.50 students, $5.50 children 4–12, free for children 3 and under. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–5pm, Thurs 10am–7pm, Sun noon–5pm.

Virginia Museum of Transportation ★★ Kids In a restored freight depot, this wide-ranging museum has aviation and automotive exhibits, but its best feature is an extraordinary collection of vintage locomotives, passenger and mail cars, and cabooses on display out back. You can climb aboard some of them, get up close and personal with others, but the best way to see them is on a guided tour (call for times). Kids can ride model trains, cars, and a helicopter in the playground. Inside, they will get a kick out of a gargantuan and very real model railroad. The oral history exhibit featuring African Americans talking about working on the railroad is worth an adult stop. You'll need 1 to 2½ hours to thoroughly digest all the exhibits.

303 Norfolk Ave. (at 3rd St.). ✆ **540/342-5670.** www.vmt.org. Admission $8 adults, $7 seniors, $6 children 3–11, free for children 2 and younger. Combination tickets with O. Winston Link Museum $10 adults,

 $8 seniors, $6 children 3–11, free for children 2 and younger. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm. Rail yard closes 30 min. earlier.

OTHER DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS

The two museums below have been housed in Center in the Square, as was the Art Museum of Western Virginia until it was reborn as the Taubman Museum of Art (see above). Plans could be afoot to close the center for a major refit, so call before coming to these museums.

History Museum of Western Virginia Tools, costumes, and weapons tell the story of Roanoke and southwestern Virginia from American Indian days 10,000 years ago through early settler days 2 centuries ago to the present. The museum carries books, maps, and prints for sale. Joint tickets are available with the O. Winston Link Museum (see above).

1 Market Sq., in Center in the Square. ✆ **540/342-5770.** www.history-museum.org. Admission $3 adults, $2 seniors and children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Free second Fri of each month. Tues–Fri 10am–4pm; Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm.

Science Museum of Western Virginia/Hopkins Planetarium Kids Children will be intrigued with the high-tech interactive exhibits here. A weather gallery features a tornado simulator and a Weather Channel–like studio. Other permanent galleries have hands-on exhibits in physics, geology (including a moon rock), and the human body ("Big Mouth" is a walk-in human mouth). The Hopkins Planetarium offers programs related to the stars, planets, and galaxies; the MegaDome Theatre shows big-screen films. The museum store on the ground level offers a fascinating collection of educational toys.

1 Market Sq., in Center in the Square. ✆ **540/342-5710.** www.smwv.org. Exhibits admission $8 adults, $7 seniors, $6 children 3–12, free for children 2 and younger. Add $2 for planetarium, $3 for MegaDome. Planetarium only $3 per person. MegaDome only $3 per person. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm.

ATTRACTIONS ON MILL MOUNTAIN

Situated between the city and the Blue Ridge Parkway, Mill Mountain offers panoramic views over Roanoke Valley. The two main attractions are in **Mill Mountain Park,** on the Mill Mountain Parkway Spur, a winding road that leaves the Blue Ridge Parkway at Mile 120. Local citizens know they're home when they see the white neon **Roanoke Star on the Mountain.** Erected in 1949 as a civic project, it stands 89 feet tall, uses 2,000 feet of neon tubing, and is visible from most parts of the city. Stop at the base for a magnificent view over the city and valley.

Also here is the **Discovery Center** (✆ **540/853-1236;** www.roanokeva.gov/outdoors), which explains the wildlife, geology, and history of the mountain. Its honeybee exhibit is worth seeing. Admission is free. It's open from April through October Monday through Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 1 to 5pm; November through March Monday through Saturday noon to 4pm, Sunday 1 to 5pm.

From the city, take Walnut Avenue, which becomes the J.P. Fishburn Parkway and intersects the Mill Mountain Parkway Spur at the entry to Mill Mountain Park.

Mill Mountain Zoo Kids This small zoo is home to more than 50 animal species, including snow leopards, monkeys, prairie dogs, hawks, red pandas, Japanese macaques, and a bald eagle. The animals are caged, so don't come up here if that bothers you. An open-air, narrow gauge train runs around the periphery, giving access to red wolves and deer. You'll need about 1½ hours up here. The zoo is about a 5-minute walk from the

parking lot. It's much more scenic to take the pathway through the wildflower garden than the paved road.

Mill Mountain Pkwy. Spur (in Mill Mountain Park). ✆ **540/343-3241.** www.mmzoo.org. Admission $7.50 adults, $5 children 3–11, free for children 2 and younger. Train rides $2. Daily 10am–4:30pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

WHERE TO STAY

The most convenient choices to the Blue Ridge Parkway include the **Holiday Inn Tanglewood** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 540/774-4400) and a **Sleep Inn** (✆ 800/628-1929 or 540/772-1500). Near the airport, Hershberger Road (Exit 3 off I-581) has the **Holiday Inn Roanoke Valley View** (✆ 888/465-4329 or 540/362-4500) and the **Best Western at Valley View** (✆ 800/362-2410 or 540/362-2400). Farther out, Peters Creek Road (Exit 2 off I-581) has a **Courtyard by Marriott** (✆ 800/321-2211 or 540/563-5002), a **Hampton Inn** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 540/265-2600), and an inexpensive **Super 8 Roanoke** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 540/563-8888).

Colony House Motor Lodge ★ The same family has owned and operated this clean, well-maintained motel since it was built in 1959 (yes, it's authentically "retro"). A series of peaked roofs creates cathedral ceilings in some of the spacious rooms, all of which have louvered screen doors that let in fresh air without sacrificing privacy. About half the units are at the rear of the property; they face a steep hillside and get less light but also less traffic noise. All have refrigerators and microwave ovens, and two suites have whirlpool tubs. A roadside outdoor swimming pool has a view of the Kmart across Franklin Road. Continental breakfast is served here. Carlos Brazilian International Cuisine (p. 201), Montano's (p. 202), and other restaurants are nearby.

3560 Franklin Rd. (U.S. 220 Business), Roanoke, VA 24014. ✆ **866/203-5850** or 540/345-0411. Fax 540/345-1137. www.colonyhousemotorlodge.com. 72 units. $70 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From I-581/U.S. 220, exit at Franklin Rd. (U.S. 220 Business), turn left at traffic signal to motel on right. From Blue Ridge Pkwy., take U.S. 220 Business west, exit on Franklin Rd. north to motel on right. **Amenities:** Pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, Wi-Fi.

Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center—A Doubletree Hotel ★★★ The Norfolk and Western Railroad built this grand Tudor-style hotel in 1882 on a hill overlooking its new town. Heated by steam from the railroad's maintenance shops and cooled by America's first hotel air-conditioning system (using circulating ice water), it became a resort as well as a stopover. Virtually every celebrity passing though Roanoke stayed here. For the locals, it was *the* place for wedding receptions, reunions, beauty pageants, and other special events. It was closed from 1989 to 1995, when it reopened after a magnificent restoration financed in part by Virginia Tech and local residents. Now managed by

Tips Worth a Look

Even if you don't stay at the **Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center,** come inside after visiting the O. Winston Link Museum across the street to see the hotel's rich, black walnut–paneled lobby with its Oriental rugs and leather lounge furniture. To the right, as you enter, is the oval-shaped Palm Court lounge with its four lovingly restored murals of Colonial and Victorian Virginians dancing the reel, waltz, minuet, and quadrille.

Doubletree Hotels, it's recognized as a Historic Hotel of America, and Roanokers—who call it simply The Hotel—again celebrate very special occasions in the elegant **Regency Room** (p. 201). Pub fare is available in the knotty **Pine Room Pub,** which has a large bar, sports TV, and billiards table. Given the odd shape of the structure, there are now 92 room configurations, many with sloping ceilings and gable windows. Some have windows on two sides, while a few others seem like small cottages.

110 Shenandoah Ave., Roanoke, VA 24016. ✆ **800/222-8733** or 540/985-5900. Fax 540/853-8264. www.hotelroanoke.com. 332 units. $130–$210 double; $260–$460 suite. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $7; valet parking $12. From I-581 south, take Exit 5, cross Wells Ave. into parking lot. **Amenities:** 2 restaurant; 2 bars; concierge; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hrs.).

WHERE TO DINE

Roanoke is one of Virginia's more interesting dining scenes. While you can still get good country cooking here (including my favorite biscuits), young chefs are using flavors their Southern ancestors never imagined, much less tasted.

Downtown Restaurants

Market Square (see "Exploring Market Square," above) is Roanoke's dining center, with the 3 blocks of Campbell Avenue between Williamson Road and Jefferson Street, and the contiguous block of Jefferson Street, offering a host of restaurants catering to many tastes and all pocketbooks. Most post their menus outside, so take a stroll and see what's happening.

A *très* cool bistro and wine bar, **202 Market,** 202 Market Sq. (✆ **540/343-6644**), competes head-to-head with Metro! (see below) as coolest downtown restaurant. The Market Square branch of **Awful Arthur's Seafood Company,** 108 Campbell Ave. (✆ **540/344-2997**), has surprisingly good fish, is open on Sunday, and has sidewalk tables during warm weather. Despite its French name, the casual but refined **Le Bistro,** 125 Campbell Ave. (✆ **540/206-2611**), roams the globe. For something more down home, **The Blues BBQ,** 107 Market Sq. (✆ **540/344-5683**), specializes in the vinegary North Carolina version.

A block to the west, **Frankie Rowland's Steakhouse,** 104 S. Jefferson St. (✆ **540/527-2333**), is Roanoke's swankiest purveyor of tender beef. It's across the street from Alexander's (see below).

I check my e-mail and get my caffeine fix at **Mill Mountain Coffee & Tea Co.,** 117 Campbell Ave. (✆ **540/342-9404**), which has fresh salads and deli sandwiches for lunch. When my arteries were younger, I took my morning lard at **Ernie's,** 210 Market St. (✆ **540/342-7100**), which opens at 6am Monday through Saturday. Ernie's does not accept credit cards.

Alexander's ★★ AMERICAN In operation since 1979, Alexander's was the first trendy restaurant to open during downtown's Renaissance, and it's still one of the best. The pinkish lighting, widely spaced tables, and extraordinarily attentive waitstaff make this a great place for special occasions. Using organic meats, vegetables, and cheeses, the New American menu blends the classics with flavors from Louisiana, Asia, and the Mediterranean. Veal Alexander, with lump crabmeat and a hollandaise sauce, is a regular, as is shrimp étouffée with grits cakes, which will exercise your taste buds.

105 S. Jefferson St. ✆ **540/982-6983.** www.alexandersva.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $20–$39. AE, MC, V. Wed 11am–2pm; Tues–Thurs 5–9pm; Fri–Sat 5–10pm.

Corned Beef & Co. Bar and Grill AMERICAN A block west of Market Square, this lively sports-bar emporium—the largest one of its kind I've ever seen—occupies half a city block. There's a sophisticated billiards parlor and *beaucoup* TV screens for watching every game being televised at the moment. You can even watch from a rooftop patio during warm weather. Having a good time may be the main reason to come here (it literally overflows with young folk on weekend nights), but the chow is better than average pub fare: deli sandwiches (including the namesake corned beef), salads, wood-fired pizzas, and main courses such as chicken *diablo* (a breast piqued with Texas Pete hot sauce). I'm particularly fond of the shrimp and asparagus quesadillas.

107 Jefferson St. ✆ **540/342-3354.** www.cornedbeefandco.com. Reservations accepted. Salads, sandwiches, burgers $7–$10; pizzas $10–$14; main courses $11–$23. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–midnight (bar till 2am).

Metro! ★★ Finds MODERN AMERICAN This sophisticated, high-energy bistro and lounge brings the big city to Roanoke. You can watch the chefs scurrying around the open kitchen through the big storefront windows on Campbell Avenue, but wander on in for a drink and some sushi at the large martini bar, which dominates the main dining room. An ample sampling of the city's well-heeled young professionals will be here, especially on weekend nights when Metro! turns into a South Beach–style lounge. Beforehand, the kitchen provides a wide range of exciting fare, from sushi and sashimi to Maryland-style crab cakes.

14 Campbell Ave. ✆ **540/345-6645.** www.metroroanoke.com. Reservations recommended, especially on weekends. Sushi $8–$15; main courses $16–$35. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon 5–10pm; Tues–Sat 11:30am–2pm and 5–10pm (bar to 2am).

Norah's Cafe ★ AMERICAN The Taubman Museum of Art's cafe is an excellent place for lunch even if you don't go upstairs to see its namesake, John Singer Sargent's portrait of Mrs. George Gribble. You can watch the trains rumble by outside the glass walls, which make it seem like you're lunching alfresco. The limited menu features out-of-the-ordinary salads, sandwiches, wraps, and desserts. My Cobb salad with steamed lobster was excellent.

110 Salem Ave., in Taubman Museum of Art. ✆ **540/204-4122.** www.taubmanmuseum.org. Sandwiches and salads $7–$12. AE, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sun 10am–3pm, Thurs 10am–7pm.

The Regency Room ★★★ INTERNATIONAL The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center's main dining room has long been Roanokers' favorite place for a special dinner, and with good reason. Fresh flowers adorn the widely spaced tables, and the waitstaff provides the best service in town. The food lives up to the setting, too. The signature peanut soup has been around since 1940, and it provides a fitting—if fattening—entree to the crab cakes, which hold a half-pound of back-fin lumps, the best part of these tasty crustaceans. There's live music for dancing on Friday and Saturday nights.

In Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, 110 Shenandoah Ave. ✆ **540/985-5900.** www.hotelroanoke.com. Reservations recommended. Breakfast $7–$14; main courses $20–$32. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 7–10:30am, 11:30am–2pm, and 5–9pm; Fri–Sat 7–10:30am, 11:30am–2pm, and 5–10pm.

Restaurants Nearer the Blue Ridge Parkway

Carlos Brazilian International Cuisine ★★ BRAZILIAN It's worth taking a ride out to Brazilian-born chef Carlos Amaral's fine restaurant, across from the Tanglewood Mall, not only for the excellent food but for the view over the Roanoke Valley.

Most restaurants here have no view at all, but reserve as soon as possible for a patio table or one in the semicircular Olinda Room, whose window walls offer an unimpeded vista (and be sure to tell them you want the Olinda Room). The food highlights are obviously Brazilian, and include *moqueca mineira,* a blend of shrimp, clams, and fish in a slightly spicy tomato sauce and served over rice and thinly sliced onions and green peppers. Chicken sautéed with pineapple, papaya, and apples is another winner. Vegetarians can pick from pastas, Brazilian black beans served with collard greens, or a meatless version of paella Valenciana (there's regular paella, too).

4167 Electric Rd. (U.S. 220 Business; south of I-581/U.S. 220). ✆ **540/342-6455.** www.carlosbrazilian.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $10–$30. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 5–10pm; Sat 4–10pm. From downtown, take I-581/U.S. 220 south to 1st Franklin Rd. exit, turn right, go uphill on Electric Rd., make U-turn after Ogden Rd.; restaurant is up hill on right. From Blue Ridge Pkwy., take U.S. 220 west to 1st Franklin Rd. exit, turn left, go uphill on Franklin Rd., which becomes Electric Rd., make U-turn after Ogden Rd.; restaurant is up hill on right.

Montano's INTERNATIONAL Entry into this busy, casual restaurant is through a market whose chiller cases are stuffed with excellent cold cuts, cakes, and chocolates, its shelves packed with wines and beers from around the world. Likewise, the lengthy menu spans the globe from Chesapeake crab cakes to Spanish paella, from Italian veal Parmigiano to Brazilian *moqueca.* All of it is good (although I prefer the *moqueca* at Carlos's, above) and served in prodigious portions. More than 20 sandwiches and 15 salads appear, and vegetarians have half a dozen choices. One side of the big room is devoted to a sports bar, where musicians appear on weekends. Montano's is very popular with locals of every age and taste.

3733 Franklin Rd., in Townside Festival Center. ✆ **540/344-8960.** www.montanos.net. Reservations recommended on weekends. Sandwiches and burgers $8–$9; main courses $12–$25. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon 10am–10pm, Tues–Sat 10am–10:30pm.

Roanoker Restaurant ★ Value AMERICAN A popular local restaurant since 1941, the Roanoker occupies a Colonial-style building surrounded by much-needed parking lots. Several dining rooms offer booth seating arranged to provide privacy. Antique signs from Roanoke businesses adorn the walls. At breakfast, the fluffy biscuits are the best I've ever eaten, either plain, sandwiching country ham or sausage, or covered in sausage gravy. Lunch and dinner specials change daily, depending on available produce. If you're lucky, the fresh vegetables will include skillet-fried yellow squash and onions, a mouthwatering Southern favorite.

2522 Colonial Ave. (south of Wonju St.). ✆ **540/344-7746.** www.theroanokerrestaurant.com. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $4–$8.50; sandwiches $5.50–$7; main courses $7.50–$13. MC, V. Tues–Sat 7am–9pm; Sun 8am–9pm. From downtown, go south on Franklin Rd., turn right on Brandon Ave., left on Colonial Ave. From I-581/U.S. 220, go south to Colonial Ave. exit, turn left at traffic light on Colonial Ave. to restaurant on left.

ROANOKE AFTER DARK

Available at the visitor center (see "Essentials," earlier in this chapter) and at many hotels and restaurants, the free *City Magazine* (www.citymagazineonline.com) has a rundown of what's going on around town.

The **Taubman Museum of Art** frequently has concerts, lectures, and films in the evenings (see "The Top Attractions," above). The **Roanoke Civic Center,** 710 Williamson Rd. NE (✆ **540/853-5483;** www.roanokeciviccenter.com), hosts visiting performers and concerts by **The Roanoke Symphony** (✆ **540/343-9127;** www.rso.com).

Fun Facts Dirty Dancing

Mountain Lake played the part of the Catskills resort in the movie *Dirty Dancing,* starring Jennifer Grey and the late Patrick Swayze.

Baseball fans can see the Class A **Salem Red Sox** (✆ **540/389-3333;** www.minorleaguebaseball.com), an affiliate of the big-league Boston Red Sox, play in Salem, Roanoke's sister city.

The Market Square area running along Campbell Avenue to Jefferson Street is Roanoke's pub-crawling scene, especially on weekends when many restaurants and pubs have music and dancing. **Metro!** and **202 Market** attract the well-heeled young professional set, while **Corned Beef & Company** gets the sometimes rowdy masses; don't be surprised to see a cop or two across Jefferson St. (See "Where to Dine," above, for details about all three.) **The Regency Room** and the **Pine Room** in the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center (p. 199) have live music and dancing on weekends.

A NEARBY MOUNTAIN RESORT

Mountain Lake Hotel Surrounded by 2,600 acres, this rustic mountaintop resort consists of a stately, rough-cut-stone lodge with clusters of small, white-clapboard summer cottages nearby. The lobby has a massive fireplace. A stone archway separates the lobby from the adjoining bar and lounge. The spacious, stone-walled dining room has large windows offering panoramic lake views—a romantic evening setting. More than 20 types of accommodations are available in the main hotel, cottages, and the Blueberry Ridge Complex (units in the latter are more sizeable and modern, and they're open year-round). The popular parlor suites have Jacuzzis and fireplaces, and some rooms offer lake views. Dark-wood Chippendale-reproduction furnishings give the decor a traditional look. Cottages are more simply furnished, although guests enjoy kitchens and porches with rockers. Chestnut Lodge is a three-story gray-clapboard building set on the side of a hill. Rooms here are decorated in country style, with fireplaces and balconies. Your unit will not have a TV, but there's plenty of swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, and tennis to keep you busy.

Pembroke, VA 24136. ✆ **800/346-3334** or 540/626-7121. Fax 540/626-7172. www.mountainlakehotel.com. 101 units, including 22 cottages. $195–$300 double; $295–$365 suite; $220–$920 cabin. Rates include breakfast and dinner. AE, DISC, MC, V. Hotel closed Nov–Apr. From I-81, take Exit 118B, U.S. 460 west; turn right onto C.R. 700 and go 7 miles to Mountain Lake. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; children's programs; Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; sauna; tennis court; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* Kitchen (10 cottages only), Wi-Fi.

4 OUTDOORS IN THE SOUTHWEST HIGHLANDS

The Southwest Highlands are great for getting outdoors and experiencing nature, especially if you're into hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Mount Rogers National Recreation Area (NRA), one of Virginia's prime locales for backcountry activities, runs for

60 miles along the mountaintops south of I-81 between Wytheville and Abingdon. Adding to the allure are two old railroad beds turned into excellent biking-and-hiking trails on its northern and southern flanks: the New River Trail State Park to the north and the Virginia Creeper Trail to the south.

MOUNT ROGERS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Noted for its 400 miles of hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and horse trails, including part of the Appalachian Trail, Mount Rogers NRA includes 117,000 forested acres. Included is its namesake, Virginia's highest peak at 5,729 feet. Nearby White Top is the state's second-highest point at 5,520 feet. Most of the land, however, flanks Iron Mountain, a long ridge running the area's length. Ranging the extensive upland meadows are wild ponies, introduced to keep the grasses mowed.

Not all of this expanse is pristine; as part of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, it's subject to multiple uses such as hunting and logging. Nevertheless, you'll find three preserved wilderness areas and plenty of backcountry to explore, with mountain scenery that's some of the best in Virginia.

Just the Facts

ACCESS POINTS & ORIENTATION Access roads from I-81 are U.S. 21 from Wytheville, Va. 16 from Marion, S.R. 600 from Chilehowie, Va. 91 from Glades Spring, and U.S. 58 from Damascus and Abingdon. S.R. 603 runs 13 miles lengthwise through beautiful highland meadows from Troutdale (on Va. 16) to Konnarock (on U.S. 58).

INFORMATION Because the area is so vast and most facilities widespread, it's a good idea to get as much information in advance as possible. Contact the **Mount Rogers National Recreation Area,** 3714 Hwy. 16, Marion, VA 24354 (✆ **800/628-7202** or 276/783-5196; www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/mr).

FEES, REGULATIONS & BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS There is no charge to drive through the area, but parking fees of $3 per vehicle apply to specific recreational areas, payable on the honor system. Except for the Appalachian Trail and some others reserved for hikers, mountain bikes are permitted but must give way to horses. Bikers and horseback riders must walk across all bridges and trestles. Hikers must not spook the horses. Fishing requires a Virginia license. The "leave no trace" ethic applies: Leave nothing behind, and take away only photographs and memories.

VISITOR CENTER The area headquarters is at 3714 Va. 16, about 6 miles south of Marion (take Exit 45 off I-81 and go south on Va. 16). Exhibits describe the area, and there's a bookstore with maps and other publications for sale. The center is open Memorial Day through October Monday through Friday from 8am to 4:30pm, Saturday from 9am to 4pm. The rest of the year, it's open only Monday through Friday from 8am to 4:30pm. It's closed on federal holidays.

SEASONS The area gets the most visitors on summer and fall weekends and holidays. Spring is punctuated by wildflowers in bloom (the calendars published by the Blue Ridge Parkway are generally applicable here), while fall foliage is at its brilliant best in mid-October. Cross-country skiers use the trails during winter. Summer thunderstorms, winter blizzards, and fog any time of the year can pose threats in the high country, so caution is advised.

The Top Scenic Drives

You can enjoy the scenery without getting out of your car. From Marion on I-81, take Va. 16 south 16 miles to the country store at Troutdale. Turn right on S.R. 603 and drive 13 miles southwest to U.S. 58. Turn right there and drive 20 miles down Straight Branch—a misnomer if ever there was one—through Damascus to I-81 at Abingdon.

An alternative route is to continue on Va. 16 south past Troutdale and turn west on U.S. 58. This will take you past **Grayson Highlands State Park.** After the park, turn right on S.R. 600 north. This road climbs almost to the summit of White Top Mountain. Up there, a dirt track known as Spur 89 branches off for 3 miles to the actual summit; it's the highest point in Virginia to which you can drive a vehicle and has great views. S.R. 600 then descends to a dead-end at S.R. 603; turn right there and drive down to U.S. 58, then west to Damascus and Abingdon, as described above.

Outdoor Pursuits

CAMPING In addition to the horse camps mentioned below, the recreation area has several other campgrounds, all open from mid-April through December. A limited number of sites can be reserved in advance by calling ✆ **877/444-6777** or going to www.recreation.gov.

On S.R. 603 between Troutdale and Konnarock, **Grindstone** serves as a base camp for hikers heading up Mount Rogers. It has 109 sites with campfires, drinking water, a .5-mile nature trail, and weekend ranger programs during summer. **Beartree Recreation Area,** a popular site 7 miles east of Damascus on U.S. 58, features a sand beach on a 12-acre lake stocked with trout for fishing. Both Grindstone and Beartree have flush toilets and warm showers. Grindstone has electric and water hookups; Beartree does not. Fees range from $3 to $19 per night.

HIGH-COUNTRY HIKING Almost two-thirds of the area's 400 miles of trails are on these routes: the local stretch of the **Appalachian Trail** (64 miles), the **Virginia Highlands Horse Trail** (66 miles), and the **Iron Mountain Trail** (51 miles). Many of the other 67 trails connect to these main routes, and many can be linked into circuit hikes.

You can walk for days on the white-blaze Appalachian Trail without crossing a paved road, especially on the central stretch up and down the flanks of Mount Rogers between S.R. 603 and S.R. 600. A spur goes to the top of the mountain. The blue-blaze **Mount Rogers Trail,** a very popular alternate route, leaves C.R. 603 near Grindstone Campground; a spur from that track heads down into the pristine Lewis Fork Wilderness before rejoining the Appalachian Trail.

Running across the southern end of the area, the **Virginia Creeper Trail** offers a much easier, but no less beautiful, hike (and bike ride). This 34-mile route follows an old railroad bed from Abingdon to White Top Mountain (see "The Virginia Creeper Trail," below).

HORSEBACK RIDING Riders can use 150 miles of the area's trails, including Iron Mountain, New River, and the Virginia Highlands Horse Trail, which connects Elk Garden to Va. 94. Horse camps are at Fox Creek, on Va. 603; Hussy Mountain, near Speedwell; and Collins Cove, about 4 miles east of Cripple Creek. They have toilets, and drinking water for horses (but no water for humans).

THE VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL ★★★

The fabulously beautiful **Virginia Creeper Trail** is a 34-mile hiking, biking, and horseback-riding route following an old railroad bed between Abingdon and White Top

Station, at the North Carolina line on the southern flank of White Top Mountain, just inside Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. The name comes from the fact that steam locomotives had such a slow time on the grade that they became known collectively as the Virginia Creeper. If you can ride a bike, this is one of Virginia's top outdoor excursions.

The trail starts at an elevation of 2,065 feet in Abingdon, drops to 2,000 feet at Damascus (11 miles east on U.S. 58), then climbs to 3,675 feet at White Top. No one I know is about to ride a bike *up* that mountain, so the idea is to stay in Abingdon, take a shuttle bus to the top, and mostly coast for 17 of the 23 gorgeous miles downhill to Damascus.

Beginning 2 miles east of Damascus, the stretch between Green Cove Station and Iron Bridge crosses High Trestle (about 100 ft. high) and has swimming holes in the adjacent stream. Green Cove is a seasonal Forest Service information post with portable toilets and a snack bar. It was at Green Cove that O. Winston Link took one of his most famous photographs, of a mare bowing her head as the Creeper crawled past. It's on display at the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke and the Abingdon Passenger Train Station in Abingdon (see sections 3 and 5, respectively).

Outfitters in Damascus renting bikes and operating shuttles to the top of the trail include **Blue Blaze Bike & Shuttle Service** (✆ **800/475-5905** or 276/475-5095; www.blueblazebikeandshuttle.com) and **The Bike Station,** 501 E. 3rd St. (✆ **276/475-3629;** www.thebike-station.com). They are on Laurel Avenue (U.S. 58) in Damascus. In Abingdon, **Virginia Creeper Trail Bike Shop** (✆ **888/245-3648** or 276/676-2552; www.vacreepertrailbikeshop.com) is on Pecan Street near the trail head. All charge about $13 per person for the shuttle; or $37 for both shuttle and rental. Reservations are advised, so call ahead.

For more information contact the Abingdon Convention & Visitors Bureau (see "Essentials" in section 5) or the website of the **Virginia Creeper Trail Club,** P.O. Box 2382, Abingdon, VA 24212 (**www.vacreepertrail.org**).

NEW RIVER TRAIL STATE PARK ★★

The exceptional **New River Trail** runs for 57 miles between Galax and Pulaski. The trail follows an old railroad bed beside the New River, which, despite its name, is in geologic terms one of the oldest rivers in the United States (it predates the Appalachian Mountains). The river flows toward the Mississippi River, on its way carving the New River Gorge in southeastern West Virginia, the best white-water rafting spot in the eastern U.S.

The park's headquarters are at **Foster Falls State Park,** a restored mining hamlet on Foster Falls Road (C.R. 608), about 20 miles northeast of Wytheville, or 2 miles north of U.S. 52 (take Exit 24 off I-77 and follow the signs). From April through November you can enter the trail here daily from 8am to dusk. Parking costs $2 per vehicle during the week, $3 on weekends and holidays.

Other entries to the trail are at **Shot Tower Historical State Park** (see below); **Draper,** near Exit 92 off I-81; **Allisonia** and **Hiwassee,** both on C.R. 693; **Barren Springs,** on

Fun Facts Trail Town, USA

The village of **Damascus** (www.damascus.org) makes so much of its living off the Virginia Creeper that it calls itself "Trail Town, USA." Its **Trail Days** festival in mid-May draws hikers and cyclists from far and wide (**www.traildays.info**).

Va. 100; **Austinville,** on Va. 69; **Ivanhoe,** on Va. 94; **Byllesby Dam,** on C.R. 602; and **Galax,** on U.S. 58. There's also a branch trail to **Fries,** on Va. 94.

Foster Falls River Company (✆ **276/699-1034**) rents bicycles, canoes, kayaks, and inner tubes at Foster Falls. Bikes cost $5 per hour or $18 per day. Canoes and kayaks start at $7 an hour or $30 per day. Tubes go for $18 per day. The company also provides shuttle service between the key points along the trail, so you don't have to walk, ride, or paddle back to your car.

The adjacent **Foster Falls Horse Livery** (✆ **276/699-2460**) rents horses and has guided horse and pony rides along the trail starting at $20 per person for short rides.

For more information, write or call **New River Trail State Park,** 176 Orphanage Dr., Foster Falls, VA 24360 (✆ **276/699-6778;** www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/new.shtml). The office is open Monday through Friday 8am to 4:30pm.

While in this area, you can stop at **Shot Tower Historical State Park,** on U.S. 52 near Exit 5 off I-77, which features a stone shot tower built about 1791. Molten lead, poured from the top of the tower, fell 150 feet into a kettle, thus cooling and turning into round shot. The lead was mined at nearby Austinville, birthplace of Stephen Austin, the "Father of Texas." (There's a monument to Austin at the New River Trail State Park in Austinville.) Admission to the park is free, but parking costs $2 per vehicle during the week, $3 on weekends and holidays. The park is open daily from 8am to dusk.

WHERE TO STAY

There are no accommodations within Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. Marion is the closest town to the area's center. Tops there is the **General Francis Marion Hotel** (✆ **877/783-4802** or 276/793-4800; www.gfmhotel.com), a lovingly restored 1927 commercial hotel on Main Street (U.S. 11) in the center of Marion's business district. On U.S. 11 north of downtown is the **Econo Lodge Marion** (✆ **800/553-2666** or 540/783-6031).

The Virginia Creeper Trail ends in Abingdon, which has several hotels and bed-and-breakfasts (see "Where to Stay" in section 5).

At the strategic intersection of I-81 and I-77 close to New River Trail State Park, Wytheville has more than 1,200 motel rooms, most in national chain establishments along the interstates. The largest concentration is at Exit 73 off I-81 (U.S. 11), where the **Holiday Inn Wytheville** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 276/228-5483) has its own restaurant. Also at Exit 73 is a **Days Inn** (✆ 800/325-2525 or 276/228-5500), **Motel 6** (✆ 800/446-8356 or 276/228-7988), and **Red Carpet Inn** (✆ 800/251-1962 or 276/228-5525). Some rooms in the Days Inn, Motel 6, and Red Carpet Inn are virtually beside I-81 and are subject to traffic noise. You can also take Exit 73 to reach a parking lot–surrounded **Econo Lodge** (✆ 800/424-4777 or 276/228-5517), about 1 mile to the south on U.S. 11.

5 ABINGDON: A SHOW-STOPPING TOWN ★★★

49 miles SW of Wytheville; 133 miles SW of Roanoke; 315 miles SW of Richmond; 437 miles SW of Washington, D.C.

While on his first expedition to Kentucky in 1760, Daniel Boone tramped across the 2,000-foot-high Holston Valley and camped at the base of a hill near a small settlement known as Black's Fort. When wolves emerged from a cave and attacked his dogs, Boone

named the place Wolf Hill. Boone and other pioneers opened the area for settlement, and by 1778, a thriving community named Abingdon had grown up around Black's Fort and Wolf Hill. The Washington County Courthouse has replaced the fort, but Boone's cave is still there, behind one of the historic buildings on tree-shaded Main Street.

Indeed, Abingdon today looks much as it did in those early years, making it one of Virginia's most picturesque small towns and one of my favorites to visit. Its beauty and historical charm have attracted more than its share of actors, artists, craftspeople, and even a few writers. Visitors drive hundreds of miles to attend shows at the Barter, Virginia's official state stage, and the town is crowded the first 2 weeks of August for the popular Virginia Highlands Festival, a display of the region's best arts and crafts.

You can spend a fascinating few days walking around this beautiful town, seeing a couple of plays, and literally coasting on your bike down White Top Mountain on the Virginia Creeper Trail, one of the country's great bicycle paths (p. 205).

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Contact the **Abingdon Convention & Visitors Bureau,** 335 Cummings St., Abingdon, VA 24210 (✆ **800/435-3440** or 276/676-2282; fax 276/676-3076; www.abingdon.com). Located in a gorgeous Victorian house, the **Abingdon Visitors Center** is on the left as you drive into town on U.S. 58. It's open daily from 9am to 5pm. Stop here to pick up a map and walking tour brochure.

GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND **Tri-Cities Regional Airport** (✆ **423/325-6000;** www.triflight.com) is near I-81 about 30 miles southwest of Abingdon between Bristol and Kingsport, Tennessee. You can rent a car there.

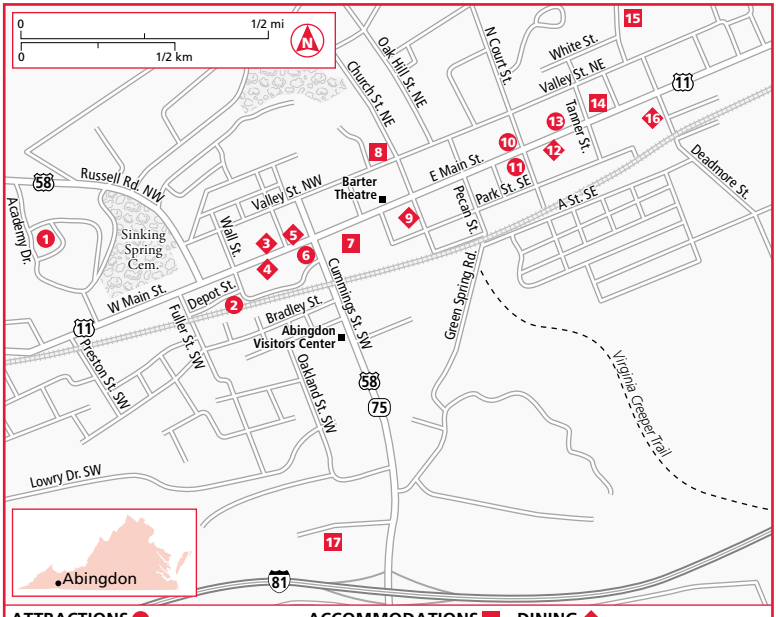
Abingdon is at the junction of I-81 and U.S. 11, U.S. 19, and U.S. 58. From I-81, take Exit 17 and follow U.S. 58 West directly into town. U.S. 11 runs east-west along Main Street (which has a phenomenal amount of traffic for such a small town). The local **taxi depot** is at 495 W. Main St. (✆ **276/628-4409**).

WHAT TO SEE & DO

Using the walking tour brochure and map you picked up at the visitor center (see "Essentials," above), head out on the brick sidewalks to explore the historic part of Main Street, which runs for about ¾ mile. It goes up and down two hills, so wear comfortable walking shoes.

Begin your tour at the **Fields-Penn 1860 House Museum,** at the corner of Main and Cummings streets (✆ **276/676-0216**), which depicts how Abingdon's upper class lived in the mid–19th century (James Fields, who built it, was a bricklayer and building contractor; George Penn, who bought it in the 1890s, was a lawyer). The museum is open from April to December Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. Admission is $3 adults, $2 children 6 to 12, free for kids 5 and under.

From there, you'll head west on Main Street through Abingdon's 3-block-long business district. Several antiques and collectibles emporia will vie for your attention, but keep going to Depot Square. Turn left there to the restored **Abingdon Passenger Train Station,** now home to the **Historical Society of Washington County** (✆ **276/628-8761;** www.hswcv.org). Don't miss the small collection of dramatic railway photographs by O. Winston Link, whose work is also showcased in his museum in Roanoke (p. 196). The station is open April to October Monday through Friday 10am to 4pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm (weekdays only Nov–Mar).



ATTRACTIONS
Abington Passenger Train Station/ Abingdon Arts Depot **2**
Cave House **13**
Fields-Penn 1860 House Museum **6**
Star Museum **11**
Washington County Courthouse **10**
William King Museum **1**

ACCOMMODATIONS
The Martha Washington Hotel & Spa **7**
The Shepherd's Joy **15**
Summerfield Inn B&B **8**
Summers Cottage **14**
Super 8 Motel **17**

DINING
The Barter Café **9**
House on Main **3**
Peppermill **1**
Pop Ellis Soda Shoppe & Grill **5**
The Tavern **12**
Withers Hardware Restaurant **4**
Zazzy'z Coffee House **16**

The old freight depot next door is now the **Abingdon Arts Depot** ★ (✆ **276/628-9091;** www.abingdonartsdepot.org), where you can watch artists at work in their studios April to October Thursday through Saturday 11am to 3pm.

Now backtrack east along Main Street, where the Martha Washington Hotel & Spa, the Barter Theatre, and 30 other buildings and homes—with birthdates ranging from 1779 to 1925—wait to be observed. At the bottom of the hill, a right turn on Pecan Street will take you to the western head of the **Virginia Creeper Trail** (see section 4). Parked under a shed there is "Abingdon's Mollie," or officially Norfolk & Western Engine No. 433, similar to the steam locomotives that had such a tough time with the grade that they became facetiously known as the "Virginia Creeper."

Back on Main Street, turn right and walk up the next hill to the **Star Museum,** 170 E. Main St. (✆ **276/608-7452**), containing a huge collection of celebrity memorabilia gathered by Abingdon native Robert Weisfeld, who lived in New York City for 16 years. Marilyn Monroe's red cocktail dress, Errol Flynn's swim trunks, and a copy of Michael Jackson's first Motown single ("I Want You Back") are well hidden among the items. None of them are labeled, so call in advance to arrange a guided tour by Robert. Admission is $10 adults, $3 children 12 and under.

Fun Facts The Wolves & Daniel Boone's Dogs

After walking over Abingdon's second hill—where the 1869 Washington County Courthouse stands—you'll come to the **Cave House,** now home to the Cave House Crafts Shop (see "Shopping," below). Behind the house is the cave from whence emerged the wolves that attacked Daniel Boone's dogs. It's not marked, but to find it, take the alley to the left of the house to a stop sign, and turn right. You can peer through lattice into the mouth of the cave, which is below a rickety old barn.

Stop at the top of the hill and look up at the Tiffany stained-glass windows in the **Washington County Courthouse,** built in 1869 to replace an earlier version burned during the Civil War. The Tiffany windows were added as a memorial to World War I veterans. From here you'll head downhill again past **The Tavern,** considered the oldest building in town. Built around 1779 and used as a stagecoach inn and tavern, it's now home to one of the town's better restaurants (see "Where to Dine," below). You can still see the mail slot in the original post office in an addition on the east side of the building.

On the west side of town, art lovers can visit the **William King Museum,** 415 Academy Dr. (✆ **276/628-5005;** www.williamkingmuseum.org), which is very good at showcasing the region's cultural heritage. It also hosts visiting exhibits. There's also a good museum shop. Admission is $5 adults, $3 for seniors and students. The center is open Tuesday 10am to 9pm; Wednesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm; Sunday 1 to 5pm. The center is in a refurbished school building (turn uphill off West Main St. on Academy Dr. and follow the signs for arts-center parking).

A NEARBY GRISTMILL & A WINERY

A scenic 4¼-mile drive leads from Valley Street in Abingdon through a picturesque valley to **White's Mill** (✆ **276/628-2960;** www.whitesmill.org), built in 1790 and now on the National Register of Historic Places. It's owned by a nonprofit foundation, which is slowly restoring its 22-foot diameter steel wheel and original grinding stone. Admission is by donation, and it's open Wednesday through Sunday 10am to 6pm. Closed January and February. You can buy meal from the mill's electric grinders. A shop across the road sells local handcrafts.

In rolling hills about 7½ miles east of town, **Abingdon Vineyard & Winery** (✆ **276/623-1255;** www.abingdonwinery.com) is open for tasting its reds and whites from March 15 to December 15, Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 6pm, Sunday noon to 6pm. Follow U.S. 58 east 5 miles past I-81, turn right on Oseola Road (S.R. 722), and follow the grape cluster signs 2½ miles to the winery.

SHOPPING

Mountain arts and crafts are for sale in the **Cave House Crafts Shop** ★★, 279 E. Main St. (✆ **276/628-7721;** www.cavehousecraftshop.org), a 130-member cooperative in the 1858 Victorian home built in front of the famous wolf cave. The handmade quilts here are extraordinary. The shop is Monday through Saturday 10am to 5:30pm; Sunday 1 to 5pm.

Main Street has no fewer than 10 **antiques shops,** which you will pass during your walking tour. Note that most are closed on Sunday, some on Monday.

WHERE TO STAY

Abingdon has six chain motels adjacent to I-81. **Hampton Inn** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 276/619-4600) and **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 276/676-3310) are most convenient to downtown at Exit 17. **Quality Inn & Suites** (✆ 877/676-9090 or 276/676-9090) and **Holiday Inn Express** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 276/676-2929) are at Exit 19, at the north end of town. **Best Western Abingdon Inn & Suites** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 276/676-3310) and **Comfort Inn** (✆ 800/221-2222 or 276/676-2222) are at Exit 14, between downtown and Dixie Pottery.

The Martha Washington Hotel & Spa ★★★ Across Main Street from the Barter Theatre in the heart of the historic district, this is one of Virginia's best in-town country inns. The center portion of this Greek Revival structure was built in 1832 as a private residence and later served as a girls school. White-wicker chairs give the front porch the look of an old-time resort. With loudly creaking floors, the lobby and adjoining parlors are elegantly decorated, with original marble fireplaces and crystal chandeliers. Choose from regular or deluxe rooms, the latter larger and more lavishly appointed with fine antiques. Two premium suites have two fireplaces, whirlpool tubs, and steam showers. Another suite has a small private balcony overlooking Main Street. The **dining room** serves good American fare amid Victorian elegance at breakfast and dinner, and **Martha's Gourmet Market** offers made-to-order sandwiches and salads Monday to Saturday from 10am to 3pm. You can pamper yourself in the full spa, swim all year in the indoor pool, and soak in two hot tubs out in a pleasingly landscaped garden.

150 W. Main St., Abingdon, VA 24210. ✆ **888/999-8078** or 276/628-3161. Fax 276/628-8885. www.marthawashingtoninn.com. 61 units. $250–$275 double; $400–$600 suite. $20 per unit resort fee. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service; spa; tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Bed & Breakfasts

In addition to the Summerfield Inn listed below, Abingdon has more than 15 B&B accommodations. Among them, **The Shepherd's Joy** (✆ **276/628-3273;** www.shepherdsjoy.com) is a working sheep farm.

You can also rent **Summers Cottage,** 309 W. Main St. (✆ **2767/628-5556;** www.summerscottageabingdon.com), a small Victorian house built in 1909 and meticulously restored in 2009 by Ramsey and Betsy White, who also own Zazzy'z Coffee House, about 100 yards away (see "Where to Dine," below). The cottage has two bedrooms, two baths, a kitchen, and a screened back porch. Betsy is the former curator of the William King Museum and has decorated the walls with works by local artists and artisans. Rates range from $125 to $250 depending on the day of the week and the season.

Summerfield Inn Bed & Breakfast ★★ Ideally located just 1 block from Main Street and the Barter Theatre, this 1920s Colonial Revival residence is where I stay when I'm here. Wicker rockers and an old-fashioned swing on the wraparound front porch have seen me sit a few spells. The living room is furnished with a player piano and plush Regency-style sofas flanking the fireplace. The guest rooms offer both the ambience of a private home and the luxurious comfort of a fine hotel; each is elegantly furnished with antiques and reproductions. I am particularly fond of the three private units in the Carriage House next to the main building, especially the Rose Room with its two-person hot tub and walk-in shower. In fact, five of the seven units here have jetted tubs. Friendly hosts Janice and Jim Cowan serve full breakfasts in the formal dining room or, in warm weather, on the porch.

 101 W. Valley St., Abingdon, VA 24210. ✆ **800/668-5905** or 276/628-5905. Fax 276/628-7515. www.summerfieldinn.com. 7 units. $165–$195 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

Don't forget the dining room and Martha's Gourmet Market in the Martha Washington Inn (see above). The dining room is Abingdon's most elegant place to dine, while the daytime market provides excellent salads and sandwiches.

Other choices include the eclectic **Peppermill,** 967 W. Main St. (✆ **276/623-0530**), about a mile west of downtown, and **Withers Hardware Restaurant,** 260 W. Main St. (✆ **276/628-1111**), which occupies an old hardware store.

The Barter Café DELI Big window walls let lots of light into this delightful, garden-like room attached to the Barter Theatre's Stage II. Theater posters add an artsy touch, while easy chairs and sofas make this seem like a coffeehouse. In fact, you can get your morning latte or espresso here, plus high-cholesterol pastries. Big deli sandwiches, paninis, and wraps are both lunchtime and evening specialties. Everything is made from scratch, so don't be in a rush. Order at the counter and they'll call an actor's name when your order is ready (I did love being called Harrison Ford). Notice the *Book of Fantasies* sculpture out front.

110 Main St. (actually on Church St.). ✆ **276/619-5462.** www.bartertheatre.com. Reservations not accepted. Salads and sandwiches $6.50–$7.50. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Tues 11am–4pm; Wed–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 11am–10pm.

House on Main ★ Finds AMERICAN Next to the Tavern (see below), this is Abingdon's most charming restaurant. It resides in a large house built in 1909 and standing behind two huge shade trees in the middle of the business district. Owners Tim and Bubs Nichols bought it in a state of disrepair in 2008 and performed this extraordinary restoration in just 6 months. Top tables in warm weather are out on the front porch, but the former dining room and study are adorned with antiques, original oak paneling, and Tim's collection of remarkably life-like Civil War paintings by artist John Paul Strain. The charm of the house outpaces the quality of the food, although I found the grilled salmon under a homemade apple butter barbecue sauce to be quite tasty. I will order smoked prime rib the next time I'm here on a weekend. The parlor is now home to Abingdon's favorite bar.

231 W. Main St. ✆ **276/619-0039.** www.houseonmain.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $8–$30. AE, DISC, MC, V. May–Oct Tues–Sat 11am–2pm and 5–9pm. Nov–Apr Tues–Sat 5–9pm.

Pop Ellis Soda Shoppe & Grill Finds AMERICAN As I noted in chapter 5, President Obama has been known to unexpectedly jump out of his limousine, run into a local joint, and order a burger and fries—as he did here while campaigning for the White House in 2008. He came into a former pharmacy, whose soda fountain harkens back to days when every drug store had one. "Hand-jerked" sodas, sundaes, and banana splits are as good as they come. The menu also provides burgers and a wide range of sandwiches and salads. I really enjoyed a dinner-size helping of homemade shrimp salad served in a pita with potato chips and fresh fruit. Vegetarians have several choices. No alcoholic beverages are sold here.

217 W. Main St. ✆ **276/623-8187.** www.ellishomehealth.com. Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches, burgers, and salads $6–$10. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–9pm.

The Tavern ★★ INTERNATIONAL Set aside a night for the Tavern, for having dinner in the town's oldest building is an essential part of the Abingdon experience. The Tavern was built in 1779 as an inn for stagecoach travelers. Exposed brick and stone walls, log beams, and hand-forged locks and hinges make it seem little changed since then. Despite the indoor charm, choice warm-weather tables are on an upstairs porch or on the brick terrace under a canopy of towering trees. The menu reflects gregarious German-born owner Max Hermann's well-traveled background, with Wiener schnitzel, baked salmon sprinkled with Thai spices, chicken saltimbocca, and medallions of beef with a French influence.

222 E. Main St. ✆ **276/628-1118.** www.abingdontavern.com. Reservations recommended for outdoor seating. Main courses $25–$33. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5–10pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Wildflour Bakery Value AMERICAN Housed in the Campbell House, a Victorian-era farmstead now adjacent to I-81, this restaurant is really three establishments. It's a coffeehouse in the mornings, with freshly baked pastries to accompany your caffeine. Then it becomes a lunch spot with soups, salads, and large sandwiches. A talented chef takes over at night and brings a touch of fine dining. He might offer sockeye salmon crusted with roasted garlic and served with a Creole cream sauce. Your conversation at a few outdoor tables may be drowned out by noise from trucks lumbering toward I-81.

2444 Lee Hwy. (U.S. 11 at I-81 Exit 19). ✆ **276/676-4221.** Reservations recommended at dinner. Lunch $5–$8; main courses $16–$26. AE, MC, V. Mon 7am–3pm; Tues 7am–6pm; Wed–Sat 7am–9pm (dinner 5–9pm). From downtown, take Main St. (U.S. 11) north; restaurant is 1st bldg. on left after I-81.

Zazzy'z Coffee House ★ Finds COFFEE SHOP/DELI When failing eyesight made Dr. Ramsey White stop filling cavities, he converted this Victorian house from dental offices into this charming coffee shop. One room contains Abingdon's only bookstore (you can buy the *New York Times* here), while another is set aside for Internet access (two computer terminals plus wireless access, all complimentary). In addition to house-ground coffee, the snack bar in the rear serves breakfast and lunches of deli-style sandwiches, salads, and soups.

380 E Main St. ✆ **276/698-3333.** www.zazzyz.com. Reservations not accepted. Most items $3–$6. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7:30am–6pm; Sat 8am–6pm; Sun 9am–3pm.

ABINGDON AFTER DARK

During summer you can take in a movie at the **Moonlite Drive-in,** on U.S. 11 South (✆ **276/628-7881**). It's one of a handful of drive-in movie theaters left in Virginia.

Barter Theatre ★★★ Official policy still permits barter for admission (with prior notice), but theatergoers now pay with cash or plastic to attend the State Theater of Virginia, America's longest-running professional repertory theater. The building was constructed around 1832 as a Presbyterian church and later served as a meeting hall for the Sons of Temperance. It functioned as the town hall and opera house from 1876 until 1933, when Robert Porterfield brought his unemployed actors here (see "Hams for Hamlet," below). Recent productions, now performed by a professional company, have included *Forever Plaid* and *Of Mice and Men.* The theater's alumni include Patricia Neal, Ernest Borgnine, Gregory Peck, Ned Beatty, and Kevin Spacey. Across Main Street, the **Barter's Stage II** specializes in the classics. The season for both stages runs from February through December. The main stage is dark Monday.

127 W. Main St. (at College St.). ✆ **276/628-3991.** www.bartertheatre.com. Tickets $20–$40, depending on show and time.

Fun Facts Hams for Hamlet

The career of an aspiring, Virginia-born actor named Robert Porterfield came to a halt during the Great Depression. Giving up on Broadway, he and 22 other unemployed actors came to Abingdon in the summer of 1933 and began putting on plays and shows. Their first production was John Golden's *After Tomorrow,* for which they charged an admission of 40¢, or the equivalent in farm produce—thus did their little operation become known as the Barter Theatre.

Playwrights who contributed—among them Noel Coward, Thornton Wilder, Robert Sherwood, Maxwell Anderson, and George Bernard Shaw—were paid with a Virginia ham. Shaw, a vegetarian, returned the smoked delicacy and requested spinach instead; Porterfield and his crew obliged.

The Carter Family Fold Music Shows ★★ Anyone with the slightest interest in country or traditional mountain music will make the 78-mile round-trip from Abingdon to Maces Spring, a hamlet in the Poor Valley, where you will see and hear established and aspiring artists every Saturday night at the Carter Family Memorial Music Center. This is the ancestral home of country music royalty A. P. Carter, wife Sara, and Maybelle Addington Carter (Maybelle was Sara's cousin, A. P.'s sister-in-law, and mother of June Carter, who married Johnny Cash). Their descendants won't allow today's performers to use any electric equipment, so the music is as pure as it was when the Carters cut their first record in 1927. These are no formal concerts, for local residents buck dance and clog in front of the stage. Come early to visit the log cabin in which A. P. Carter was born in 1891 and to see the Carter Family Museum in the country store he operated from 1943 until his death in 1960. An annual music festival during the first weekend in August (the same time as the Virginia Highlands Festival in Abingdon) draws well-known singers and music groups, clog-dance performers, and local artisans who sell crafts.

C.R. 614, Maces Spring. ✆ **276/386-9480.** www.carterfamilyfold.org. Music show tickets $15 adults, $3 children 6–11, free for children 5 and younger. Add $5 for floor seating. Museum and cabin admission 50¢ per person. Shows Sat 7:30pm; doors and museum open 6pm. From Abingdon take I-81 south 17 miles to Bristol, U.S. 58 west 19 miles to Hiltons, then C.R. 614 east 3 miles to auditorium.

Richmond

Now a sprawling metropolitan area flanking the James River in the center of the state, Richmond has been Virginia's capital since 1780 and has been the stage for much history. It was in Richmond's St. John's Church that Patrick Henry concluded his address to the second Virginia Convention with the stirring words "Give me liberty, or give me death!" During the Revolution, turncoat Gen. Benedict Arnold led British troops down what is now Main Street in 1781 and set fire to many buildings, including tobacco warehouses—in those days, the equivalent of banks. Cornwallis briefly occupied the town, and Lafayette came to the rescue.

Richmond is an essential stop for every Civil War enthusiast, for it was as capital of the Confederate States of America that the city left an indelible mark on American history. Jefferson Davis lived in the Confederate White House here while presiding over the rebel government, and it was in the mansion that Robert E. Lee accepted command of the Army of Northern Virginia. For 4 years, the Union army tried unsuccessfully to capture the city. Troops often battled on its outskirts; its tobacco warehouses overflowed with prisoners of war, its hospitals with the wounded, and its cemeteries with the dead. Richmond didn't fall into Union hands until Lee abandoned Petersburg—an easy excursion to the south—a week before surrendering at Appomattox.

Since it fell to Grant's army in 1865, Richmond has changed in many ways, not the least in its demographics. Many descendants of the white Confederate soldiers have fled to the sprawling suburbs, leaving the African-American descendants of the slaves those soldiers fought to keep in bondage to make up a majority of the municipality's population—and the city council.

Racial tensions ran high for many years. For example, the city council created a stir by voting to place a statue of the late Arthur Ashe—the great African-American tennis star and Richmond native—among those of Civil War heroes lining Monument Avenue.

But local residents have come together lately to launch a rebirth of Richmond's downtown area, including construction of a sparkling performing arts center and the conversion of an abandoned department store into a fine new hotel.

In addition to its Civil War battlefields and museums, Richmond has splendid historic homes, an excellent fine arts museum, a hands-on science museum with state-of-the-art planetarium, and a charming botanical garden.

1 ORIENTATION & GETTING AROUND

VISITOR INFORMATION

The **Richmond Visitors Center,** 401 N. 3rd St. (btw. Clay and Marshall sts.), Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **888/742-4666;** www.visitrichmondva.com), provides information and operates a same-day discounted hotel reservation service. It also shows a 10-minute orientation video. The center is in the Greater Richmond Convention Center and is

Impressions

Broad-streeted Richmond . . . The trees in the streets are old trees used to living with people. Family trees that remember your grandfather's name.

—Stephen Vincent Benet, *John Brown's Body*

open daily from 9am to 5pm (to 6pm from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day). There is free 20-minute parking in spaces by the serpentine brick wall on 3rd Street between Clay and Marshall streets.

In addition, the **Richmond International Airport Visitors Center** (✆ **804/236-3260**) is open Monday through Friday 9:30am to 4:30pm.

The state operates a visitor information center in the **Bell Tower** (✆ **804/786-4485**) on the State Capitol grounds, off 9th Street between Grace and Marshall streets. It's open Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm. The small gift shop is a good place to stock up on "Virginia Is for Lovers" gear.

Another comprehensive source of information is **www.discoverrichmond.com**, a community site operated by the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* newspaper (www.timesdispatch.com).

As soon as you see one, grab a copy of Richmond's free alternative newspaper, ***Style Weekly*** (www.styleweekly.com), available in boxes throughout town. It is a very good source of what's going on while you're here.

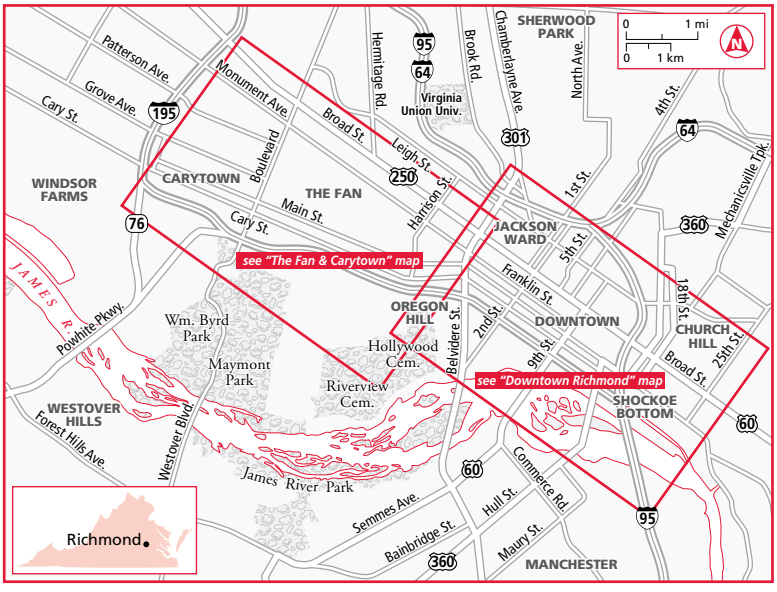
GETTING THERE

BY PLANE American, Continental, Delta, JetBlue, United, and US Airways fly to **Richmond International Airport (RIC),** Airport Drive off I-64, I-295, and Williamsburg Road (U.S. 60; ✆ **804/226-3052;** www.flyrichmond.com), about 15 minutes east of downtown. The major car-rental companies have desks at the airport, and taxis are available. **Groome Transportation** (✆ **800/552-7911** or 804/222-7222; www.groome transportation.com) offers 24-hour van service to Richmond, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, and Williamsburg. One-person fares range from $22 to downtown Richmond to $44 to Williamsburg. Public bus service is available during weekday morning and evening rush hours (see "Getting Around," below), but frankly, if I could afford to fly into Richmond, I would forget the local bus system.

BY CAR Richmond is at the junction of **I-64,** traveling east-west, and **I-95,** traveling north-south. **I-295** bypasses both Richmond and Petersburg on their east sides. **U.S. 60** (east-west) and **U.S. 1** and **U.S. 301** (north-south) cross here.

BY TRAIN & BUS Several daily **Amtrak** (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) trains pull into two stations here. The main terminal is at 7519 Staples Mill Rd. (U.S. 33), north of I-64. There is no shuttle service from the Staples Mill Road station into tourist areas, so a better choice is the **Main Street Station** at 1500 E. Main St. in Shockoe Bottom. This restored French Renaissance–style building served as the city's transportation hub from 1901 until 1959 and is itself worth a look.

The **Greyhound/Trailways** bus terminal is at 2910 N. Boulevard (✆ **800/231-2222;** www.greyhound.com).



CITY LAYOUT

Richmond is located at the fall line of the James River. Several bridges cross the river, and there's access to Brown's Island and Belle Isle from the **Richmond Riverfront Canal Walk,** a promenade extending along the downtown riverfront beside the **James River & Kanawha Canal** (see "What to See & Do," later in this chapter).

Instead of growing away from the river, the original city spread westward along the north shore. Thus, the main streets run east-west for several miles from the original settlement, in today's Shockoe Bottom. The two main drags I use all the time are **Main Street,** which is one-way going west, and the parallel **Cary Street,** one-way going east. **Broad Street** also is a major east-west thoroughfare, and it's one of the few downtown streets with two-way traffic—and many intersections at which you cannot make a left turn.

Foushee Street divides street numbers east and west, while **Main Street** divides them north and south.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN BRIEF

As you explore the neighborhoods described below (moving from east to west), you'll get a good sense of Richmond's history.

Church Hill Named for St. John's Church, its major landmark, this east Richmond neighborhood is largely residential, with many 19th-century Greek Revival residences.

Tobacco Row Bordering Church Hill and paralleling the James River for some 15 blocks between 20th and Pear streets, this is the latest urban redevelopment area. Handsome redbrick warehouses are being turned into apartment houses.

The Edgar Allan Poe and Virginia Holocaust museums are here.

Shockoe Bottom Roughly bounded by Dock and Broad streets and 15th and 20th streets, Shockoe Bottom was Richmond's first business district. It once encompassed tobacco factories, produce markets (farmers still sell produce at **17th Street Farmer's Market** btw. E. Main and E. Franklin sts.), slave auction houses, warehouses, and shops, and it retains much of its original character. Today, old-fashioned groceries with signs in their windows for fresh chitterlings stand alongside trendy shops, restaurants, and noisy nightclubs aimed primarily at 20-somethings.

Shockoe Slip Bordering downtown roughly between 10th and 14th streets and Main and Canal streets, this warehouse and commercial area was reduced to rubble in 1865 and rebuilt as a manufacturing center after the war. With its cobblestones restored and old-fashioned street lamps providing light, East Cary Street features renovated warehouses containing restaurants, galleries, nightspots, shops, and two major hotels. The Richmond Riverfront Canal Walk boat rides begin here.

Downtown West and north of Shockoe Slip, downtown is Richmond's governmental and financial center. It includes the old and new city halls, the state capitol, and government buildings of **Capitol Square;** and the historic homes and museums of the **Court End** area, notably the Valentine Richmond History Center, Museum and White House of the Confederacy, and John Marshall House. On its western edges it encompasses the Coliseum, the city's convention center, and several blocks of East Broad Street, which was once home to Richmond's grand department stores and is being redeveloped, including Richmond CenterStage, the city's new performing arts venue.

Jackson Ward North of Broad Street, the National Historic District of Jackson Ward was home to many free African Americans before the Civil War ended slavery. Its famous residents have included the first woman bank president in the United States, Maggie Walker, and legendary dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, who donated a stoplight for the safety of children crossing the intersection of Leigh Street and Chamberlayne Avenue (where a monument to him stands today). Notable, too, is the fine ornamental ironwork gracing the facades of many Jackson Ward residences.

The Fan Just west of downtown, The Fan is named for the shape of the streets, which more or less "fan" out from downtown. Bordered by West Broad, Boulevard, West Main, and Belvidere, this gentrified area of turn-of-the-20th-century town houses includes Virginia Commonwealth University and many restaurants and galleries. The main drag is on West Main Street between South Harrison and South Lombardy streets. Monument Avenue's most scenic blocks, with the Civil War statues—and one of African-American tennis star Arthur Ashe—down its median strip, are in The Fan.

Carytown Just west of Boulevard, affluent Carytown has been called Richmond's answer to Georgetown. Cafes, restaurants, boutiques, antiques shops, and the Byrd Theater, a restored 1928-vintage movie palace, bring weekend crowds to West Cary Street between Boulevard and Nasemond Street.

Tips Safety in Richmond

As in any city, it's wise to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings, whatever the time of day. Ask at the visitor center or at your hotel desk if a neighborhood you intend to visit is safe. Most neighborhoods described in this chapter are generally safe during the day, and Shockoe Slip, Shockoe Bottom, The Fan, and Carytown are safe during the evening when their restaurants are open. Nevertheless, avoid all deserted streets after dark. Most hotels have free shuttles in the downtown area, so take them when going out in the evening.

GETTING AROUND

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION The **Greater Richmond Transit Company** (GRTC; ✆ **804/358-GRTC** [4782]; www.ridegrtc.com) operates the **public bus** system throughout the metropolitan area. Base bus fare is $1.25 (exact change only). Service on most bus routes begins at 5am and ends at midnight. GRTC also has express bus service from Richmond to both Petersburg and Fredericksburg.

BY TAXI Call **Yellow Cab Service Inc.** (✆ **804/222-7300**) or **Veterans Cab Association** (✆ **804/329-1414**). Fares are approximately $1.50 per mile.

2 WHERE TO STAY

The **Richmond Visitors Center** (✆ **888/742-4666;** www.visitrichmondva.com) has a reservations service on its website, and it makes same-day reservations for walk-in visitors, often at a discount (see "Visitor Information," above). Note that inexpensive rooms can be scarce here on race weekends at Richmond International Raceway (see "Sports & Outdoor Activities," later in this chapter).

Chain motels are scattered throughout the suburbs. The Executive Center area, on West Broad Street (U.S. 33/250) at I-64 (Exit 183), about 5 miles west of downtown, is a campuslike area convenient to the major attractions. The best of its hotels is the California-style **Sheraton Richmond West** (✆ 800/325-3535 or 804/285-1234), which provides a free shuttle to downtown. Nearby are the Colonial-look **Comfort Inn Executive Center** (✆ 800/228-5150 or 804/672-1108), a **Courtyard by Marriott** (✆ 800/321-2211 or 804/282-1881), a **Days Inn** (✆ 800/329-7466 or 804/282-3300), an **Econo Lodge** (✆ 800/553-2666 or 804/672-8621), the **Hampton Inn West** (✆ 800/426-7866 or 804/747-7777), the **Holiday Inn West** (✆ 800/465-4329 or 804/285-9951), a **Shoney's Inn** (✆ 800/222-2222 or 804/672-7007), and a **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 804/672-8128).

All of the hotels listed below provide **free shuttle service** to attractions and restaurants within a 3-mile radius, which covers all of downtown.

VERY EXPENSIVE

The Jefferson Hotel ★★★ One of Virginia's finest hotels, this stunning six-story Beaux Arts building is the creation of Maj. Lewis Ginter, a founder of the American

Tobacco Company who in addition founded the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden (see "What to See & Do," later in this chapter). The magnificent limestone-and-brick facade is adorned with Renaissance-style balconies, arched porticos, and an Italian clock tower. Two-story faux-marble columns, embellished with gold leaf, encircle the soaring rotunda—the original lobby—which has a small museum explaining the hotel's history. From there, the marble grand staircase, wide and red-carpeted, leads up to reception in the Palm Court lobby. There Edward Valentine's statue of Thomas Jefferson stands directly under a stained-glass domed skylight, 9 of its 12 panes original Tiffany glass.

Furnished with custom-made 18th-century reproduction pieces, the well-equipped rooms come in 57 different configurations, including two-room suites with a multitude of phones (politicians make good use of them when the state legislature is in session). It's worth an extra $20 or so a night to get one of the Deluxe rooms, which have more space and charm—some have their original fireplace mantels—than the Superior models. Some Deluxe King rooms have balconies, as does the presidential suite.

Lemaire, the hotel's prime dining room, specializes in Chesapeake-style seafood. The **Rotunda** (as in the University of Virginia) is put to use for outstanding Sunday brunches (about $55 for adults, $20 for children, including champagne; reservations are required). Off the Rotunda, **T.J.'s** (as in Thomas Jefferson, who else?) offers good Mediterranean-inspired fare in a relaxed setting. The hotel's bar is almost hidden behind the Rotunda's original reception windows. Across the way, the gift shop serves freshly brewed coffees and teas. Other notable amenities include a state-of-the-art health club and a resortlike indoor pool under a skylight.

Your pets can enjoy the luxuries here, too.

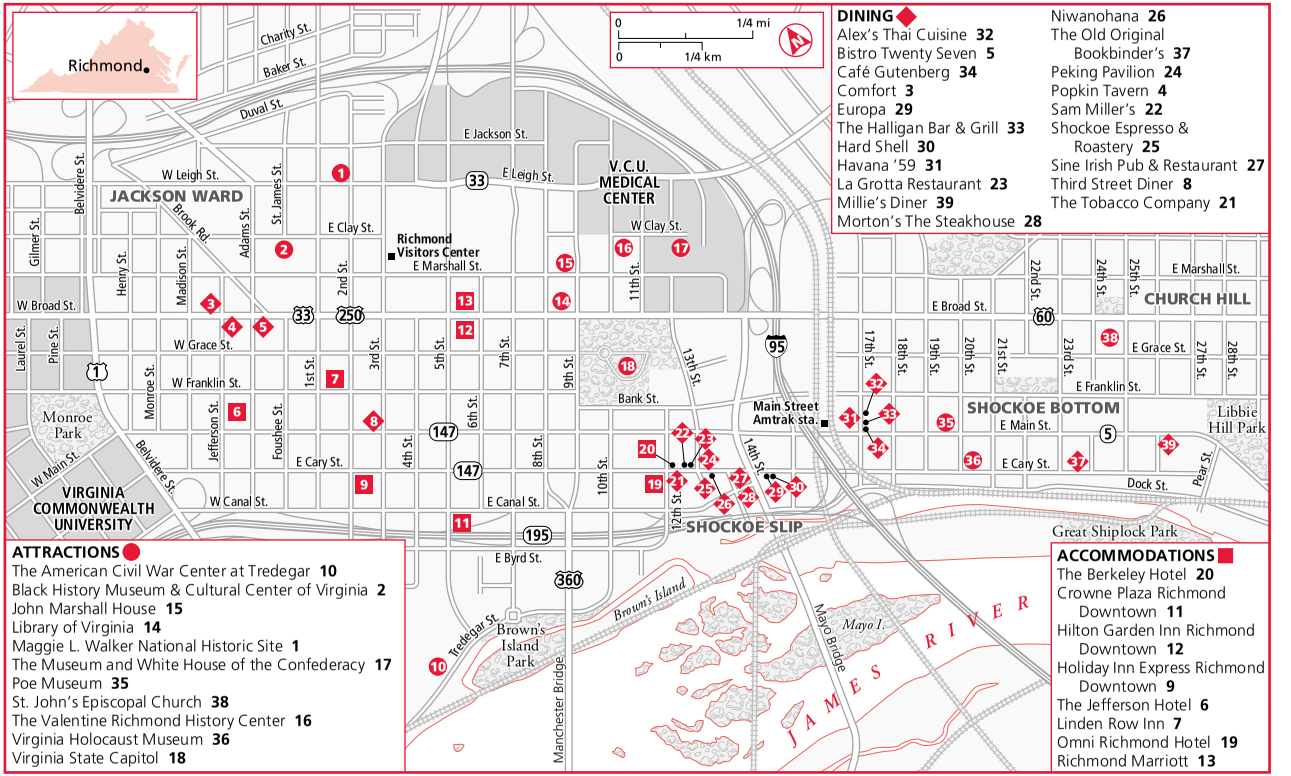
101 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23220. ✆ **800/484-8014** or 804/788-8000. Fax 804/225-0334. www.jeffersonhotel.com. 262 units, including 36 suites. $310–$340 double; $395–$2,100 suite. Weekend and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $12; valet parking $16. Pets accepted ($50 per-day fee). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

EXPENSIVE

The Berkeley Hotel ★★ At this elegant inn, on the border of downtown and Shockoe Slip, a handsome redbrick facade opens into a seemingly old-world interior. Although established in 1988, the hotel creates the illusion that it was built long ago. A cozy ambience and attentive service prevail. The luxuriously appointed guest quarters—some with whirlpool tubs—are decorated in a French country theme. The

Fun Facts Mr. Jefferson's Ascot

With its Rotunda, grand marble staircase, skylit Palm Court, and small museum dedicated to itself, The Jefferson Hotel is an attraction in its own right. Take a close look at Edward Valentine's stunning statue of Thomas Jefferson standing in the middle of the Palm Court. In an effort to save it during a 1902 fire, Valentine and others lassoed the statue and pulled it down on some mattresses. Unfortunately the fall decapitated Mr. Jefferson. The Valentine Richmond History Center can't confirm it, but hotel legend says the sculptor added the ascot to conceal T.J.'s scar.



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Berkeley's **Dining Room** is one of Richmond's most refined hotel dining rooms. **Nightingale's Lounge** adjoins.

1200 E. Cary St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **888/780-4422** or 804/780-1300. Fax 804/648-4728. www.berkeleyhotel.com. 55 units. $229–$259 double; $675 suite. Weekend and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $15. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Crowne Plaza Richmond Downtown You won't mistake this Crowne Plaza for any other building in town—it's a starkly modern, triangular 16-story high-rise with reflecting glass windows. Most of the rooms offer stunning river and city views, especially the Point Suites in the sharp corners of the building (their windows render 270-degree views). Some suites are bi-level, with sleeping lofts upstairs. It's less expensive than the Berkeley and the Omni Richmond, and it's only a few blocks to Shockoe Slip. The mezzanine-level **Pavilion Cafe** serves all three meals, while the **Great Room** off the lobby offers Starbucks coffee, drinks, and light fare with a view of Canal Walk.

555 E. Canal St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **800/227-6963** or 804/788-0900. Fax 804/788-7087. www.crowneplaza.com/ric-downtown. 299 units. $99–$229 double; $250–$880 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $10; valet parking $14. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Omni Richmond Hotel ★ Along with the Berkeley Hotel (see above) across the street, the Omni enjoys a terrific location next to Shockoe Slip's boutiques, restaurants, and clubs. It boasts a handsome pink-marble lobby, with green velvet–upholstered chairs and sofas around a working fireplace. Rooms are decorated in soft pastels, and some have spectacular views of the nearby James River. Club-floor rooms offer access to a private lounge, where a complimentary continental breakfast and afternoon refreshments are served on weekdays. **Trevi's,** the hotel's casual Italian restaurant, opens to the James Center office tower's atrium. Note that self-parking here is on an hourly in-out rate, so if you're going to use your vehicle, the valet service can be less expensive.

100 S. 12th St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **800/843-6664** or 804/344-7000. Fax 804/648-6704. www.omnirichmond.com. 361 units. $159–$199 double; $350–$750 suite. Weekend and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $21 maximum (in-out hourly rate applies); valet parking $20. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge-level rooms; access to nearby health club; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hr.).

Richmond Marriott For 2 decades this Marriott had a corner on the convention business, since it was the only hotel next to the Greater Richmond Convention Center (including the Richmond Visitors Center). But then the Hilton Garden Inn Richmond Downtown (below) opened across Broad Street, forcing it to do a bit of tidying up. The Marriott has extensive meeting space of its own, and it offers more amenities than the Hilton Garden Inn. Many of its spacious accommodations offer panoramic city views. Those on the top three floors add their own concierge lounge offering breakfast and afternoon refreshments. A bar, coffee shop, and sports bar restaurant are off the lobby. Other amenities include a health club with a shallow indoor swimming pool.

500 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **800/228-9290** or 804/643-3400. Fax 804/788-1230. www.marriott.com. 402 units. $129–$259 double; $300–$600 suite. Weekend and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $9; valet parking $12. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge-level rooms; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hr.).

MODERATE

Hilton Garden Inn Richmond Downtown ★ For generations the Miller & Rhoads department store was such a landmark that its prominent clock (now in the Valentine Richmond History Center; see below) was everyone's favorite spot to rendezvous—as in, "Meet me under the clock." But suburban stores stole its clientele, and M&R closed its doors for the last time in 1990. The building sat empty until 2009, when it reopened with 133 condominiums above this unusual hotel. The large rectangular building wraps around a glass-roof-covered courtyard, and it can be quite a hoof from the elevators to some of the guest rooms. Although the building was gutted, the architecture dictated that some units have very high ceilings and monstrous window walls. Otherwise, they are typical Hilton fare, with flatscreen TVs, both wired and wireless Internet access, microwave ovens, and MP3 docking stations in their clock radios. Both the lobby and the **Great American Grill** are adorned with photos of Richmond when everyone met under the clock.

501 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **800/HILTONS** [445-8667] or 804/344-4300. Fax 804/344-4375. www.hiltongardeninn.com. 250 units. $110–$225 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $18. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi.

Holiday Inn Express Richmond Downtown A former Quality Inn, this modest but comfortable hotel reopened as a Holiday Inn Express in 2007 after extensive renovations. It's worth paying extra for a two-room suite, five of which have two-person Jacuzzis in their living rooms. There is no restaurant on premises, but full breakfast is complimentary, and every unit has a microwave oven and a fridge. Although the hotel fronts Cary Street, you must enter the parking garage off 2nd Street between Cary and Canal streets and take the elevator to "PL," which is the lobby level.

201 E. Cary St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **888/465-4329** or 804/788-1600. Fax 8804/788-1661. www.hiexpress.com. 100 units. $109–$129 double; $119–$139 suite. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Health club. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Linden Row Inn ★ (Value) Not only the facades of this row of seven mid-19th-century Greek Revival town houses, but also their garden dependencies (small, separate buildings) have remained intact. Original interior features, such as fireplaces, marble mantels, and crystal chandeliers, grace the town houses, which the National Trust for Historic Preservation has officially designated a Historic Hotel of America. Rooms in the houses, all with windows nearly reaching the 12-foot ceilings, have a mix of late-Empire and early-Victorian pieces, with marble-top dressers. Garden rooms overlook a walled garden and patio, and the garden dependencies of the town houses offer accommodations with private entrances and contemporary-look furniture.

100 E. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23219. ✆ **800/348-7424** or 804/783-7000. Fax 804/648-7504. www.lindenrowinn.com. 70 units. $99–$169 double; $250 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $11. **Amenities:** Access to nearby YMCA. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

3 WHERE TO DINE

The city has hundreds of restaurants, of which I have room to mention only a few. You won't go wrong following the "Critics' Picks" in Richmond's free alternative newspaper, *Style Weekly* (www.styleweekly.com), available in boxes throughout town.

I've arranged the restaurants by neighborhood, running from east to west across the city in the order they're described in "Neighborhoods in Brief," above.

CHURCH HILL/TOBACCO ROW

Millie's Diner ★★ INTERNATIONAL Once Millie's really was a diner, and although it's been renovated, the counter, booths with jukeboxes, and open kitchen from those days are still here. It hasn't been a diner since 1989, when talented young chefs started turning out a variety of tasty dishes at the gas stove. My favorite, the spicy Thai shrimp, is usually on the menu, which changes every few weeks. Whatever you order, it will be made from scratch—as you watch, if you grab a counter seat. Excellent fare, an entertaining waitstaff, and hearty portions make this noisy eatery highly popular among Richmond's professionals, especially for Sunday brunch. You can dine outside at lunch or brunch during warm weather but not at dinner.

2603 E. Main St. (at 26th St.). ✆ **804/643-5512.** www.milliesdiner.com. Reservations accepted only for seating before 6:30pm. Main courses $19–$28. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 11am–2:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm; Sat 10am–3pm (brunch) and 5:30–10:30pm; Sun 9am–3pm (brunch) and 5:30–9:30pm.

The Old Original Bookbinder's ★★ AMERICAN On the first floor of River Lofts, one of the old Tobacco Row warehouses converted into condos, this branch of the Philadelphia institution is Richmond's best place for both seafood and steaks. The warehouse's brick walls and the exposed air ducts overhead add a certain rustic charm to this chic but casual spot, which is so popular you should book as soon as possible. The chef takes his own approach to traditional Chesapeake dishes such as jumbo crab cakes. For landlubbers, steaks range from 8 to 24 ounces. There's free validated parking in the lot across the street, plus valet parking Friday and Saturday evenings.

2306 E. Cary St. (btw. 23rd and 24th sts.). ✆ **804/643-6900.** www.bookbindersrichmond.com. Reservations highly recommended. Main courses $21–$38. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5–10pm; Sun 5–9pm.

SHOCKOE BOTTOM

Like Shockoe Slip and Carytown, "The Bottom" has several restaurants offering a variety of cuisines. In addition to the two below, you will be well fed at **Alex's Thai Cuisine,** 13 N. 17th St. (✆ **804/343-3934**) and **The Halligan Bar & Grill,** 3 N. 17th St. (✆ **804/447-7981**). The latter is full of firefighter memorabilia, and it smokes its own barbecue pork.

Café Gutenberg ★ Value AMERICAN/VEGETARIAN The chefs at this casual bistro raid Richmond's ancient Farmer's Market across 17th Street for their "local vegetable fondue," actually steamed fresh vegetables served with a Vermont cheese "gravy" on a French baguette. I'm more fond of their homemade corncakes, which can be ordered plain, with a mixed berry compote, topped with regular country or vegan sausage, or served with lox, cream cheese, and scrambled eggs. A variety of sandwiches and salads appear. The top main course is a mixed grill with a choice of beef, shrimp, and chicken, or with vegetarian mock duck and tofu. For dessert I can't resist the Banoffi pie: graham crackers, whipped cream, bananas, caramel, and chocolate. You can watch the Bottom scene from sidewalk tables in warm weather.

1700 E. Main St. (at 17th St.). ✆ **804/497-5000.** www.cafegutenberg.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. Sandwiches and salads $6.50–$11; main courses $12–$17. AE, DISC, MC, V. Wed–Fri 11am–11pm; Sat–Sat 8am–11pm.

Havana '59 CUBAN This lively theme restaurant presents a strange sight across the street from the covered stalls of the Farmer's Market, especially during warm weather when its big, garage-style storefront windows roll up to let fresh air in—and cigar smoke out.

Then you might swear you're in Havana in 1959 when Fidel Castro marched into town. Fake palms, ceiling fans, string lights, Cuban music, and adobe walls with gaping holes (where plaster ought to be) set a festive scene. The Cuban-accented cuisine lives up to the ambience. The menu changes frequently, so you never know what will be marching into Havana any given day. There's validated parking in the lot at Franklin and 17th streets.

16 N. 17th St. (btw. Main and Franklin sts.). ✆ **804/649-2822.** www.havana59.net. Reservations recommended. Main courses $19–$28. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5–10pm; Fri–Sat 5–11pm.

SHOCKOE SLIP

With a bevy of good-to-excellent restaurants, East Cary Street between 12th and 15th streets is Richmond's premier dining mecca, especially for tourists and conventioneers. On-street **parking** is always at a premium in this busy area, but you can resort to the municipal garage on East Cary Street at 14th Street.

You can get fresh sushi at **Niwanohana,** 1309 E. Cary St. (✆ 804/225-8801); excellent Italian at **La Grotta Restaurant,** 1218 E. Cary St. (✆ 804/644-2466); Chinese at the venerable **Peking Pavilion,** 1302 E. Cary St. (✆ 804/649-8888); Chesapeake Bay seafood at the **Hard Shell,** 1411 E. Cary St. (✆ 804/643-2333); upscale American at **Sam Miller's,** 1210 E. Cary St. (✆ 804/643-1301); and Spanish tapas and paella at **Europa,** 1409 E. Cary St. (✆ 804/643-0911).

Steak lovers with extra cash can grill it at a branch of **Morton's The Steakhouse** at 111 Virginia St. (✆ **804/648-1662**), a block south of East Cary Street (✆ **804/643-0911**).

Consistently popular as a professionals' watering hole, **Siné Irish Pub & Restaurant,** 1327 E. Cary St. (✆ **804/649-7767**), is anything but a typical Irish pub, offering a wide selection of seafood, steaks, and chicken in addition to the usual corned beef and cabbage. In warm weather you can dine and drink on the deck out back.

My top spot for morning coffee, tea, and breakfast is **Shockoe Espresso & Roastery,** 105 Shockoe Slip (✆ **804/648-3734**), which is actually on the cul-de-sac at the end of 13th Street south of East Cary Street.

The Tobacco Company AMERICAN Appropriately, this dining-entertainment complex is in a former tobacco warehouse converted to a sunny, plant-filled three-story atrium. It was a pioneer in Shockoe Slip's renaissance and still draws so many tourists and expense-account types that locals consider it a tourist trap. It's a fun place, nonetheless. An antique elevator carries you from the first-floor cocktail lounge to the two dining floors above. Nostalgic touches abound—brass chandeliers, Tiffany-style lamps, a cigar-store Indian, even an old ticket booth that now serves as the hostess desk. Exposed-brick walls are festooned with antique collectors' items. Contemporary American cuisine is featured. Lunch specialties could be as light as a vegetarian burger or as hearty as crab cakes. At dinner, you might opt for slow-roasted prime rib with seconds on the house. There's live music in The Club downstairs Tuesday through Saturday nights, with dancing Thursday through Saturday.

1201 E. Cary St. (at 12th St.). ✆ **804/782-9431.** Reservations accepted. Main courses $22–$36. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–10:30pm; Sun 10:30am–2:30pm and 5–9:30pm.

DOWNTOWN

Although much of West Broad Street is still down on its heels, the area around the Empire Theatre, between North Adams and North Jefferson streets, has seen a renaissance with the opening of art galleries and restaurants. In addition to Comfort, reviewed below, you can have Mediterranean fare at the more refined **Bistro Twenty Seven,** 27 W.

Tips A Sobering Experience

Richmond's favorite spot for after-the-bars-close sobering-up meals is the **3rd Street Diner,** 218 E. Main St., at 3rd Street (✆ **804/788-4750**), which stays open 24 hours daily. It's a noisy diner with less-than-lightning-fast service, but nothing on the menu costs more than $12.

Broad St. (✆ **804/780-0086**), and at **Popkin Tavern,** 123 W. Broad St. (✆ **804/343-1909**), a hip, high-energy sports bar.

Comfort ★ AMERICAN This old storefront with pressed-tin ceiling is home to Richmond's best comfort food, which one local wag described as "soul food for white folks." Very good versions of meatloaf, fried catfish, and pulled pork barbecue appear, all in substantial portions, but I went to the nightly specials list for a smoky pork tenderloin in a bourbon-and-molasses sauce served with braised collard greens and cheese grits. My Southern mother never cooked anything that good.

200 W. Broad St. (at N. Jefferson St.). ✆ **804/780-0004.** www.comfortrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $16–$26. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm; Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–11pm Sat 5:30–11pm.

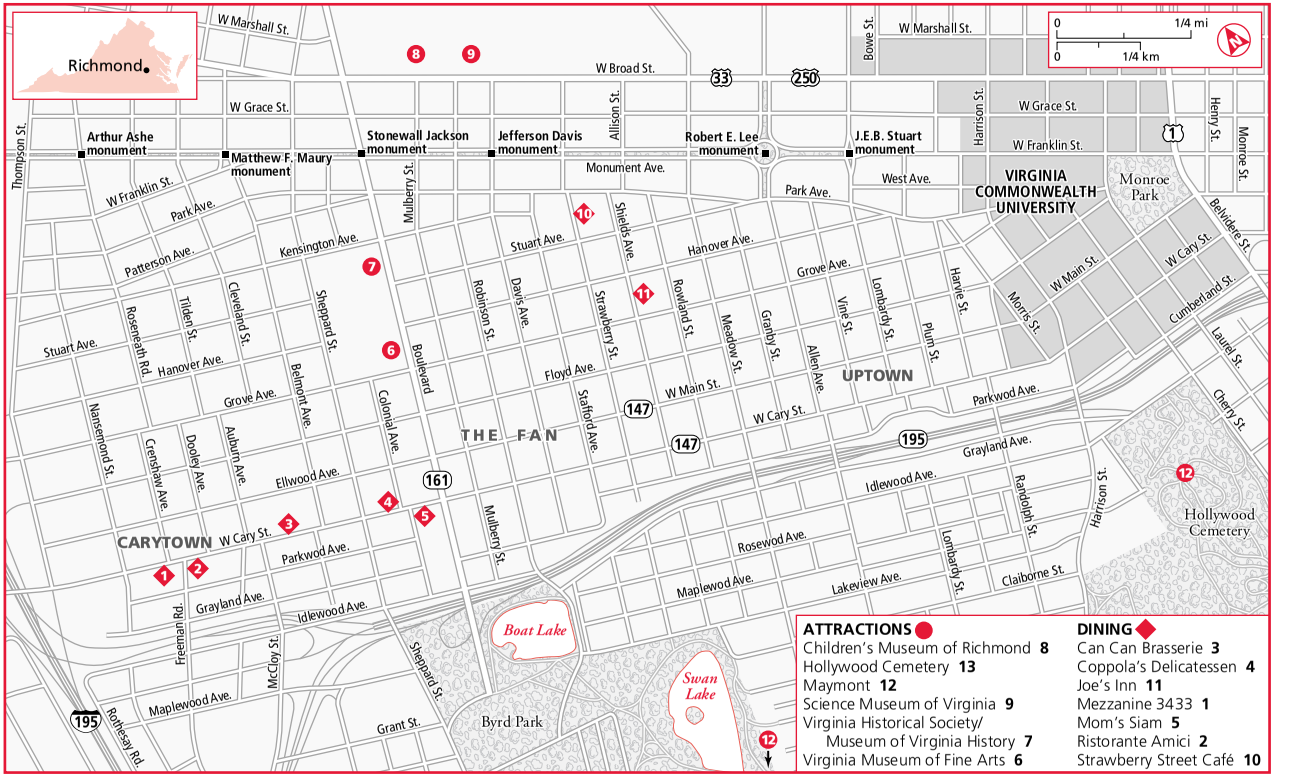
THE FAN

You pay a premium in the Shockoes for ambience and location. You get equally as good but less expensive fare by driving out to The Fan, where the two neighborhood restaurants below have been feeding the locals for years. You'll get a good look at The Fan's gentrified row houses, too, as you drive around hunting for a parking space.

Joe's Inn Value ITALIAN This consistently popular neighborhood hangout has been serving inexpensive Greek-accented Italian fare since 1952, including veal parmigiana, fish, pizzas, and pasta. The house specialty is gargantuan portions of spaghetti. Two can easily share an order of somewhat rubbery spaghetti a la Joe, which is served steaming hot *en casserole,* bubbling with a layer of baked provolone between the pasta and heaps of rich meat sauce. Soups, salads, omelets, and sandwiches are also options. Stop by anytime for a mouthwatering stack of hotcakes or French toast. Joe's occupies two storefronts: a dining room side and a bar side with sleek mahogany booths and ornate brass-trimmed ceiling fans.

205 N. Shields Ave. (btw. Grove and Hanover sts.). ✆ **804/355-2282.** www.joesinn.com. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $4.50–$14; sandwiches $4.50–$7.50; main courses $8–$15. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 9am–midnight; Fri–Sat 8am–2am; Sun 8am–midnight.

Strawberry Street Café ★ Value AMERICAN Another neighborhood favorite, this casual cafe is decorated in turn-of-the-20th-century style, with a beautiful oak bar and a gorgeous stained-glass room divider. At lunch or dinner, you can help yourself to unlimited offerings from an extensive salad bar partially nestled in a claw-foot bathtub. Summer sees fried green tomato sandwiches. The dinner menu offers pastas plus steaks, pork chops, and homemade chicken potpie with a flaky crust. The weekend brunch bar lets you create a memorable meal from an assortment of fresh fruits, yogurt, baked ham, pastries, hot breakfast foods, salads, homemade muffins, and beverages.


Richmond
W Marshall St.
W Broad St.
W Grace St.
W Franklin St.
Park Ave.
Patterson Ave.
Kensington Ave.
Stuart Ave.
Hanover Ave.
Grove Ave.
Floyd Ave.
W Main St.
W Cary St.
Parkwod Ave.
Grayland Ave.
Idlewood Ave.
Ellwood Ave.
Maplewood Ave.
Rosewod Ave.
Lakeview Ave.
Claiborne St.
Monument Ave.
Park Ave.
West Ave.
Bowe St.
Harrison St.
Henry St.
Monroe St.
Belvidere St.
Cherry St.
Laurel St.
Cumberland St.
Morris St.
Harvie St.
Vine St.
Lombardy St.
Plum St.
Allen Ave.
Meadow St.
Grasby St.
Rowland St.
Strawberry St.
Stafford St.
Robinson St.
Davis Ave.
Shields Ave.
Allison St.
Mulberry St.
Boulevard
Colonial Ave.
Belmont Ave.
Sheppard St.
Cleveland St.
Tilden St.
Rosemeath Rd.
Nansemond St.
Crenshaw Ave.
Dooley Ave.
Auburn Ave.
Freeman Rd.
McCloy St.
Shepperd St.
Randolph St.
Thompson St.
Arthur Ashe monument
Matthew F. Maury monument
Stonewall Jackson monument
Jefferson Davis monument
Robert E. Lee monument
J.E.B. Stuart monument
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
Monroe Park
UPTOWN
THE FAN
CARYTOWN
Hollywood Cemetery
Boat Lake
Swan Lake
Byrd Park
Grant St.
Rothesay Rd.
33
250
1
147
161
195
0 1/4 mi
0 1/4 km
ATTRACTIONS
Children's Museum of Richmond 8
Hollywood Cemetery 13
Maymont 12
Science Museum of Virginia 9
Virginia Historical Society/ Museum of Virginia History 7
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 6
DINING
Can Can Brasserie 3
Coppola's Delicatessen 4
Joe's Inn 11
Mezzanine 3433 1
Mom's Siam 5
Ristorante Amici 2
Strawberry Street Café 10

421 N. Strawberry St. (btw. Park and Stuart aves.). ✆ **804/353-6860.** www.strawberrystreetcafe.com. Reservations needed only for large groups. Sandwiches and burgers $7–$13; main courses $10–$15; weekend brunch buffet $11. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10:30pm; Fri 11am–11pm; Sat 10am–11pm; Sun 10am–10:30pm.

CARYTOWN

You and few other travelers will find a wide variety of cuisine along the 7 blocks of West Cary Street between Boulevard and Nasemond Street. Among them are four Thai restaurants, of which **Mom's Siam,** 2811 W. Cary St. (✆ **804/359-7607**), at Colonial Avenue, has plentiful outdoor seating.

Can Can Brasserie FRENCH This chic Parisian-style bistro and wine bar would be right at home on the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. Lots of dark wood and etched room dividers carry out the theme, and a long steel-topped bar to one side is a good place to sample both wine and *fruits de mer crus* (that is, a raw bar). It's a lively, fun joint, but I had received mixed reviews about the cuisine. My roasted red snapper atop chick pea polenta and Swiss chard proved the point; the fish was so-so but the vegetables were terrific. From now on I'm sticking to steak and fries, sole *meunière,* or a very good burger.

3120 W. Cary St. (btw. Belmont and McCloy sts.). ✆ **804/358-7274.** www.cancanbrasserie.com. Reservations recommended. Burgers $11–$12; main courses $23–$25. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–midnight; Sun 9am–3pm and 5:30–10pm. Coffee bar opens daily 7am.

Mezzanine 3433 ★ AMERICAN This lively bistro sprang on the scene in 2008 and quickly garnered awards as Richmond's best new restaurant. Although tiny, the busy kitchen lives up to the kudos with such modern Southern standards as Low Country shrimp and grits under a surprisingly spicy cream sauce. The main plates are relatively small, so I started with a small mountain of fried green tomatoes. The blackboard menu changes daily. Noisy 30-somethings can pack the small dining room and front porch, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings.

3433 W. Cary St. (btw. N. Crenshaw Ave. and N. Nansemond St.). ✆ **804/353-2186.** www.mezzanine3433.com. Reservations accepted for parties of 4 or more. Main courses $12–$29. AE, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm; Sun 10:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm.

Ristorante Amici ★ ITALIAN This delightful restaurant has been serving consistently good northern Italian cuisine since 1991. On the street floor is a small bar and seating at an enclosed sidewalk patio whose windows are open during fine weather. The family which owns Amici (which means "friends" in Italian) hail from Cervinia, a resort in the Italian Alps, where they perfected their craft. Their menu changes seasonally, but you might begin with grilled portobello mushroom caps with garlic, basil, and olive oil; and thin slices of veal loin with delicate tuna sauce. Among the entree highlights is a Black Angus tenderloin steak with a Gorgonzola cheese sauce. From the grill also come fresh salmon, Boston sole, jumbo shrimp and scallops, chicken breast, lamb chops, and bison. Stunning desserts include a wicked tiramisu. The wine list, with many Italian vintages, is surprisingly affordable.

3343 W. Cary St. (btw. Freeman Rd. and S. Dooley St.). ✆ **804/353-4700.** www.amiciristorante.net. Reservations recommended. Main courses $15–$29. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Sun 5–9pm.

Picnic Fare

In Carytown, **Coppola's Delicatessen,** 2900 W. Cary St., at South Colonial Avenue (✆ **804/359-NYNY** [6969]; www.coppolasdeli.com), evokes New York's Little Italy with an aromatic clutter of cheeses, sausages, olives, pickles, and things marinated. Behind-

the-counter temptations include pasta salads, antipasti, cannoli, specialty sandwiches, and pasta dinners. Prices are low; this is a down-to-earth deli, not a pretentious gourmet emporium, though the fare is as good as any the latter might offer. Hours are Monday through Wednesday from 10am to 8pm, Thursday through Saturday from 10am to 9pm, Sunday from 11am to 4pm. There's a branch a block north of Shockoe Slip at Main and 12th streets (✆ **804/225-0454**), which is open Monday through Friday from 10am to 4pm.

4 WHAT TO SEE & DO

Well worth taking is a 2-hour walking tour of downtown given by **Historic Richmond Tours** (✆ **804/649-0711,** option 4; www.richmondhistorycenter.com), a service of the Valentine Richmond History Center (see "Top Historical Attractions," below). They depart from the Richmond Visitors Center during the summer daily at 10:30am and cost $10 per person, including admission to The Valentine Richmond History Center.

The Valentine Center helps **Segway of Richmond** (✆ **804/343-1850;** www.segwayofrichmond.biz) to develop its 2-hour guided historical tours of downtown via those two-wheel motorized segway contraptions (which I haven't yet mastered). There are tours daily at 9:30am and 12:30, 3:30, and 6:30pm, departing from the Richmond visitor center or the company's offices at 1301 E. Cary St. in Shockoe Slip. Reservations are a must. Cost is $65 per person.

RICHMOND RIVERFRONT CANAL WALK ★

George Washington envisioned a system of canals that would link America's eastern seaboard with the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in the west. In Richmond, construction began in 1789 on the James River & Kanawha Canal, which was to run alongside the James River and connect it to the Kanawha River. It reached as far as Buchanan, Virginia, before the railroads made canal transportation obsolete in the early 19th century (its towpath was later sold to the Richmond and Allegheny Railroad, which laid tracks along it).

The city has restored more than 1 mile of the canal between Tobacco Row and the Tredegar Iron Works, at the foot of 5th Street, and turned it into the **Richmond Riverfront Canal Walk** (✆ **804/648-6549;** www.venturerichmond.com).

The ends of the walk are the most interesting parts. Near the eastern end, at the foot of Virginia Street in Shockoe Slip, you can take a 35-minute ride on the canal in a bateau operated by **River District Historic Canal Cruises** (✆ **804/649-2800**). Weather permitting, the motorized passenger boats run from mid-June to mid-August Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 7pm, Sunday from noon to 5pm. Spring and fall schedules are usually Thursday through Saturday from noon to 7pm, Sunday from noon to 5pm, but call to confirm. Rides are $5 for adults, $4 seniors and children 5 to 12, free for kids 4 and younger. Buy tickets at the booth at the foot of Virginia Street.

At the western end of the walk, at the foot of 5th Street, the **Tredegar Iron Works** on Brown's Island was the South's largest industrial complex during the Civil War, producing about half of the Confederacy's armaments. The restored brick building now houses the National Park Services' **Richmond Civil War Visitor Center at Tredegar Iron Works** (see the review for Richmond National Battlefield Park, below). Opposite the visitor center, **Brown's Island** is the scene of festivals and free outdoor concerts and movies sponsored by Venture Richmond (see the box, "Fun Freebies," later in this chapter).

The American Civil War Center at Tredegar ★★ Before visiting Richmond's other Civil War sites, I recommend going through this museum, next door to the Richmond National Battlefield's visitor center and own museum (see below). Using films, photos, contemporary quotations, and other sources, it explains the buildup to the war (1775–1860), its causes, and its legacies from three perspectives: the North, the South, and the African-American. At the end you'll have a chance to vote on what you think it was all about. The museum occupies an 1861 gun foundry building. More than 150 artifacts are on display, including life masks of Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee.

500 Tredegar St. ✆ **804/780-1865.** www.tredegar.org. Admission $8 adults, $6 seniors and students, $2 children 7–12, free for children 6 and under. Parking $3 per hr. Daily 9am–5pm.

John Marshall House ★ This is the restored home of John Marshall, a giant in American judicial history, serving as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1801 to 1835. In 1803, Marshall ruled in *Marbury v. Madison* that federal courts can overturn acts of Congress, thus establishing the doctrine of judicial review. Earlier, Marshall served in the Revolutionary Army, argued cases for his close friend George Washington, served as ambassador to France under John Adams, and had a brief term as secretary of state. He was a political foe of his cousin, Thomas Jefferson. Largely intact, the house he built between 1788 and 1790 is remarkable for many original architectural features—exterior brick lintels, interior wide-plank pine floors, wainscoting, and paneling. Period antiques and reproductions supplement Marshall's own furnishings and personal artifacts. If you have to wait for a tour, spend the time checking out the museum shop and the gardens.

818 E. Marshall St. (at 9th St.). ✆ **804/648-7998.** www.apva.org/marshall. Admission $10 adults, $7 seniors, $5 students, free for children 3 and under. Admission includes Valentine Richmond History Center and 1812 Wichham House. Mar–Oct Wed–Fri noon–4pm; Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. Guided 1-hr. house tours run as necessary Tues–Fri, on the hour and half-hour Sat–Sun. Nov–Feb by appt. only.

Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site Finds The daughter of a former slave, Maggie L. Walker was a gifted woman who achieved success in the world of finance and business and rose to become the first African-American woman bank president in the country. Originally a teacher, Walker, after her marriage in 1886, became involved in the affairs of a black fraternal organization, the Independent Order of St. Luke, which grew under her guidance into an insurance company, then into a full-fledged bank, the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank. The bank continues today as the Consolidated Bank and Trust, the oldest surviving African-American-operated bank in the United States. Walker also became editor of a newspaper and created and developed a department store. Her residence from 1904 until her death in 1934, this house remained in her family until 1979. The National Park Service has restored it to its 1930 appearance. Park rangers lead 30-minute guided tours.

600 N. 2nd St. (btw. Lee and Jackson sts.). ✆ **804/771-2017.** www.nps.gov/malw. Free admission. Mon–Sat 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. 30-min. tours depart as necessary.

The Museum and White House of the Confederacy ★★★ A required stop for Civil War buffs, this excellent museum houses the largest Confederate collection in the country, much contributed by veterans and their descendants. All the war's major events and campaigns are documented, and exhibits include period clothing and uniforms, a replica of Lee's headquarters, the role of African Americans in the Civil War, Confederate memorabilia, weapons, and art. The 1818 mansion next door was the wartime home of President Jefferson Davis. As the White House of the Confederacy, it was the center of

Tips Saving with a Court End Passport

You can save with a Court End Passport, which includes admission to the John Marshall House, the Valentine Richmond History Center, and the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia. The passports are available at the three attractions and cost $10 for adults, $7 seniors and children 4 to 18, free for children 3 and under.

social and political activity in Richmond. Formal dinners, luncheons, and occasional cabinet meetings were held in the dining room, a Victorian chamber with ornate ceiling decoration; some of the furniture in this room is original to the Davis family. The entrance hall is notable for its classical Comedy and Tragedy figures holding exquisite gas lamps. Guests were received in the center parlor, interesting now for its knickknacks produced by captured Confederate soldiers and for an 1863 portrait of Davis. You can explore the museum on your own, but you must take a guided tour (from the museum lobby) to see the house. Allow at least 2 hours for both. There is validated parking in Virginia Commonwealth University's medical center parking deck next door.

1201 E. Clay St. (at 12th St.). ✆ **804/649-1861.** www.moc.org. Museum or White House admission $9 adults, $8 seniors, $5 children 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. Combination ticket (White House and museum) $12 adults, $11 seniors, $7 children 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm (tours 11:30am–4pm); Sun noon–5pm (tours 12:30–4pm). 45-min. White House tours depart continuously. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Poe Museum ★ As a young man, the poet Edgar Allan Poe worked as an editor, critic, and writer for the *Southern Literary Messenger.* The desk and chair he used are among the memorabilia, photographs, portraits, and documents that tell the story of his rather sad life and career. The museum complex centers on the Old Stone House, the oldest building in Richmond; it dates to about 1737. Poe didn't live here, but as a 15-year-old he was part of a junior honor guard that escorted Lafayette here when the aging general visited in 1824. The other buildings were added to house the collection of Poe artifacts and publications, the largest in existence. Most fascinating is the Raven Room's illustrations of "The Raven" by Edouard Manet and James Carling.

The Poe Museum is only a block from the Virginia Holocaust Museum (p. 236), so park once to see both attractions.

1914–1916 E. Main St. ✆ **888/213-2763** or 804/648-5523. www.poemuseum.org. Admission $6 adults, $5 seniors and students, free for children 6 and under. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

Richmond National Battlefield Park ★★★ As the political, medical, and manufacturing center of the South and the primary supply depot for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, Richmond was a prime Union target throughout the Civil War. In 1862 Gen. George McClellan's Peninsula Campaign attacked from the southeast, and in 1864 Gen. Ulysses S. Grant advanced from the north. Neither succeeded in capturing Richmond, but Grant won the war by laying siege to Petersburg, thus cutting off Richmond's supplies from the south. The bloody battlefields of those campaigns ring Richmond's eastern side, now mostly suburbs, for some 80 miles.

Stop first at the **Richmond Civil War Visitor Center at Tredegar Iron Works,** at the foot of 5th Street on the Richmond Riverfront Canal Walk (see above). Here, a 22-minute video about the battles will get you oriented. Upstairs, the "Richmond Speaks"

Tips Keep Going

It's convenient to combine a tour of the Civil War battlefields east of Richmond with the James River plantations (see chapter 11), as the Fort Harrison and Glendale/Malvern Hill visitor centers are near Va. 5, the Plantation Route.

exhibit poignantly tells the city's story with photos, artifacts, and readings from letters soldiers wrote to their families. Outside stands a touching statue of President Abraham Lincoln and son Todd, a depiction of their visit to Richmond shortly after it fell in 1865. The visitor center and Chimborazo Medical Museum (see below) are open daily 9am to 5pm; they are closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Before driving around the battlefields, be sure to get the free park service brochure, which has an excellent map outlining the route, and buy a CD tour ($16) at the bookshop, which also carries a wide array of Civil War books. You will need at least an hour at the visitor center and another 3 to complete the battlefield tour without stops, so give yourself at least half a day, more to do it in comfort.

Your first stop heading out of town will be the **Chimborazo Medical Museum,** on East Broad Street at 33rd Street. This was the site of one of the Confederacy's largest hospitals (about 76,000 patients were treated here). Park headquarters are located here.

There are visitor centers at **Cold Harbor** to the northeast and at **Fort Harrison** and **Glendale/Malvern Hill** to the southeast. Cold Harbor was the scene of a particularly bloody 1864 encounter during which 7,000 of Grant's men were killed or injured in just 30 minutes. Programs with costumed Union and Confederate soldiers reenacting life in the Civil War era take place during the summer. The Cold Harbor Visitor Center is open daily 9am to 5pm, and rangers lead walking tours of the battlefield during summer. The Fort Harrison and Glendale/Malvern Hill visitor centers are open daily 9am to 5pm in summer.

For more information, contact the park at 3215 E. Broad St. at 33rd St., Richmond, VA 23223. ✆ **804/226-1981.** www.nps.gov/rich. Admission to all visitor centers is free. Parking (in the Tredegar Iron Works lot) $3 per hr.

St. John's Episcopal Church ★★ Although St. John's dates to 1741, its congregation was established in 1611. Alexander Whitaker, the first rector, instructed Pocahontas in Christianity, baptized her, and married her to John Rolfe. The building is best known as the 1775 meeting place of the second Virginia Convention. In attendance were Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, and many other historic personages. Patrick Henry stood up and delivered his incendiary words: "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains or slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" Henry's speech is reenacted on Sunday at 2pm from Memorial Day through Labor Day (admission is free but donation plates are passed). Purchase tour tickets at the gift shop behind the church.

2401 E. Broad St. (at 24th St.). ✆ **804/648-5015.** www.historicstjohnschurch.org. Free admission (donations accepted). Tours $6 adults, $5 seniors, $4 children 7–18, free for children 6 and younger. 20-min. tours given Mon–Sat 10am–3:30pm and Sun 1–3:30pm (to 4:30pm in summer); services Sun 8:30 and 11am.

Valentine Richmond History Center ★ This museum takes its name from Mann S. Valentine II, a 19th-century businessman and patron of the arts whose fortune was based on a patent medicine called Valentine's Meat Juice, and his brother, the noted sculptor Edward Valentine, whose extraordinary image of Thomas Jefferson adorns the Jefferson Hotel (p. 219). Documenting the history of Richmond, it includes the Federal-style **1812 Wickham House,** built by attorney John Wickham, Richmond's wealthiest citizen, who helped defend Aaron Burr against treason charges in 1807. Highlights include spectacular wall paintings, perhaps the rarest and most complete set in the nation. Even more interesting to me is the **Edward Valentine Sculpture Studio,** in a carriage house behind the Wickham House. It contains Edward Valentine's personal effects and plaster models of his work, including an early version of *Lee Recumbent,* now at the Lee Chapel and Museum in Lexington (p. 180). Café Richmond is a good place to refresh during your walking tour.

1015 E. Clay St. ✆ **804/649-0711.** www.richmondhistorycenter.com. Admission $8 adults, $7 seniors, students and children 7–18, free for children 6 and under. Admission includes John Marshall House and 1812 Wickham House. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. 30-min. Wickham House tours depart on the hour 11am–4pm.

Virginia State Capitol ★★ Thomas Jefferson patterned this Classical Revival building on the Maison Carrée, a Roman temple built in Nîmes during the 1st century A.D., which he greatly admired. As he did in so many of his designs, Jefferson made the central portion a magnificent rotunda, its domed skylight ceiling ornamented in Renaissance style. The room's dramatic focal point is Houdon's life-size statue of George Washington, said to be a perfect likeness. A Carrara-marble bust of Lafayette by Houdon is also here, along with busts of the seven other Virginia-born presidents. The colonnaded wings were added between 1904 and 1906, but the rest of the building makes it the second-oldest working capitol in the United States, in continuous use since 1788. Washington Irving took notes in 1807 while John Marshall tried and acquitted Aaron Burr of treason in the old Hall of the House of Delegates. The Confederate Congress also met in the room, which resembles an open courtyard.

Visitors must enter the capitol's modern welcome center under the south lawn. From there you can wander through the building, but I highly recommend a 1-hour guided tour, given on the hour until 4pm.

To the east is the **Executive Mansion,** official residence of governors of Virginia since 1813. Another historic building is the old **Bell Tower,** built in 1824, which now houses a state visitor center.

1000 Bank St. (at 10th St.). ✆ **804/698-1788.** http://legis.state.va.us. Free admission. Mon–Sat 8am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm. 1-hr. guided tours depart on the hour (last tour 4pm).

THE "BOULEVARD MUSEUMS"

The following museums are either on or near Boulevard, a major north-south avenue. While they're interesting and informative, they are not on a par with major museums in such cities as New York, Washington, and Chicago.

Virginia Historical Society/Museum of Virginia History ★ Housed in the neoclassical Battle Abbey, built in 1913 as a shrine to the state's Civil War dead, the South's oldest historical society (founded in 1831) has the world's largest collection of Virginia artifacts. Touring the major exhibit, "The Story of Virginia, an American Experience," is like rummaging through the state's attic: You'll see gold buttons from Pocahontas's hat, Patrick Henry's eyeglasses, and much more. Long-term and changing exhibits

Fun Facts A Lifelike Washington

The Houdon statue of George Washington in the rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol is the only one ever made of the first president from life. "That is the man, himself," said Lafayette. "I can almost realize he is going to move."

cover a range of subjects, from Colonial armaments to archaeologists solving Virginia historical mysteries. Genealogists will find a treasure trove of family histories in the library of some 125,000 volumes and 7 million manuscripts.

428 N. Boulevard (at Kensington Ave.). ✆ **804/358-4901.** www.vahistorical.org. Admission $5 adults, $4 seniors, free for children 17 and under. Free admission to galleries on Sun. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Easter, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Dec 24–25.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts ★★ One of the most splendid art museums for a city this size, the VMFA possesses more than 20,000 works of art, so many that it is undergoing a multiyear expansion that will add nearly 50% to its exhibition space (reopening is scheduled for May 1, 2010). Among its gems is the largest public Fabergé collection outside Russia—more than 300 objets d'art created at the turn of the 20th century for tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II. Other highlights include the Goya portrait *General Nicholas Guye,* a life-size marble statue of Roman emperor Caligula, Monet's *Iris by the Pond,* and six magnificent Gobelin *Don Quixote* tapestries. That's not to mention the works of de Kooning, Gauguin, van Gogh, Delacroix, Matisse, Degas, Picasso, Gainsborough, and others; antiquities from China, Japan, Egypt, Greece, Byzantium, Africa, and South America; art from India, Nepal, and Tibet; and an impressive collection of contemporary American art. The museum also has an inexpensive cafeteria.

200 N. Boulevard (at Grove Ave.). ✆ **804/340-1400.** www.vmfa.state.va.us. Free admission ($5 donation suggested). Wed–Sun 11am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

HOUSES, GARDENS & CEMETERIES

Agecroft Hall In an elegant neighborhood overlooking the James River, Agecroft Hall is a late-15th-century Tudor manor house built in Lancashire, England, brought here piece by piece in the 1920s. Today it serves as a museum portraying the social history and material culture of an English-gentry family of the late-Tudor and early-Stuart eras. Typical of its period, the house has ornate plaster ceilings, massive fireplaces, rich oak paneling, leaded and stained-glass windows, and a two-story great hall with a mullioned window 25 feet long. Furnishings authentically represent the period. Adjoining the mansion are a formal sunken garden, resembling one at Hampton Court Palace, and a formal flower garden, an Elizabethan knot garden, and an herb garden. Visitors see a brief video about the estate before taking the tour. Plan some time to explore the gardens as well. Appropriately, the **Richmond Shakespeare Festival** (✆ **804/323-4000;** www.richmondshakespeare.com) plays here each June and July.

4305 Sulgrave Rd. ✆ **804/353-4241.** www.agecrofthall.com. Admission $8 adults, $7 seniors, $4 students; half-price for gardens only. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun 12:30–5pm. Guided 30-min. house tours depart on hour and half-hour.

Hollywood Cemetery Perched on the bluffs overlooking the James River not far from Maymont (see below), Hollywood Cemetery is the serenely beautiful resting place of presidents Monroe and Tyler, Confederate president Jefferson Davis, six Virginia

governors, and 18,000 Confederate soldiers, including James Ewell Brown (Jeb) Stuart and 21 other Confederate generals. Designed in 1847, it was conceived as a place where nature would remain undisturbed. A 90-foot granite pyramid, a monument constructed in 1869, marks the Confederate section. A 20-minute film about the cemetery is shown in the office. The best way to see it from April through October is on a 90-minute walking tour by **Historic Richmond Tours** (✆ **804/649-0711,** option 4; www.richmondhistorycenter.com), Monday through Saturday at 10am and once a month on Sunday. The tours cost $7 per person. Reservations are required.

412 S. Cherry (at Albemarle St.). ✆ **804/648-8501.** www.hollywoodcemetery.org. Free admission. Cemetery daily 8am–5pm (to 6pm during daylight saving time); office Mon–Fri 8:30am–4:30pm.

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden ★★ In the 1880s, self-made Richmond millionaire, philanthropist, and amateur horticulturist Lewis Ginter (a founder of the American Tobacco Company and creator of the Jefferson Hotel) built the Lakeside Wheel Club as a playground for the city's elite. The resort boasted a lake, a 9-hole golf course, cycling paths, and a zoo. After Ginter's death in 1897, his niece, Grace Arents, converted the property to a hospice for sick children. An ardent horticulturist herself, she imported rare trees and shrubs and constructed greenhouses. Now owned by the city, it's one of the finest botanical gardens in Virginia. The **Conservatory** is the only such classical, domed facility in the state. Give yourself plenty of time to walk through the 40 acres of gardens, tour the Bloemendall House, visit the conservatory and library-education complex, have lunch at the **Garden Cafe** or refreshments in the **Robins Tea House,** and browse the garden shop.

1800 Lakeside Ave. (at Hilliard Rd.). ✆ **804/262-9887.** www.lewisginter.org. Admission $10 adults, $9 seniors, $6 children 3–12, free for children 2 and younger. Daily 9am–5pm (to 9pm Thurs in Apr and July–Sept). Take I-95 N. to Exit 80 (Parham Rd.) and turn left on Parham Rd., right on Lakeside.

Kids Cool Richmond Stuff for Kids

There are few DO NOT TOUCH signs in the **Science Museum of Virginia,** 2500 W. Broad St. (✆ **800/659-1727** or 804/864-1400; www.smv.org), with tons of hands-on educational exhibits aimed at children. Even adults will enjoy seeing a movie in the 250-seat Ethyl Corporation IMAX Dome & Planetarium, which shows IMAX films as well as sophisticated special-effects multimedia planetarium shows. The building itself merits attention: It's the Beaux Arts former Broad Street Station, designed in 1919 by John Russell Pope (architect of the Jefferson Memorial, the National Archives, and the National Gallery of Art) as the city's train station. Admission is $10 adults, $9 seniors and children 4 to 12. Tickets to films cost $8.50 to $10 depending on the movie. The exhibits are open Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am to 5pm, Sunday 11:30am to 5pm, and Monday 9:30am to 5pm on Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Columbus Day. Call or check the website for IMAX showtimes.

Nearby, the **Children's Museum of Richmond,** 2626 W. Broad St. (✆ **877/295-2667** or 804/424-2667; www.c-mor.org), has more innovative hands-on exhibits for kids age 6 months to 12 years. Admission is $8 per person, $4 after 4pm. It's open Tuesday through Saturday (Mon–Sat in summer) from 9:30am to 5pm, Sunday from noon to 5pm.

Maymont ★ Kids In 1886, Maj. James Henry Dooley, another of Richmond's many self-made millionaires, purchased a 100-acre dairy farm and built this 33-room Romanesque Revival–style mansion surrounded by beautifully landscaped grounds. Maymont is elaborately furnished with pieces from many periods chosen by the Dooleys—Oriental carpets, an Art Nouveau swan-shaped bed, marble and bronze sculpture, porcelains, tapestries, and Tiffany vases. The **Nature & Visitor Center** has interactive exhibits interpreting the James River. There are outdoor animal habitats for birds, bison, beaver, deer, elk, and bear. At the **Children's Farm,** youngsters can feed chickens, piglets, goats, peacocks, cows, donkeys, and sheep. A collection of late-19th- and early-20th-century horse-drawn carriages is on display at the **Carriage House.** Carriage and hayrides are a weekend afternoon option during summer. You can see everything else on your own, but you must take a guided tour in order to visit Maymont House Museum's upstairs rooms.

2201 Shields Dr. (north of the James River btw. Va. 161 and Meadow St.). ✆ **804/358-7166.** www.maymont.org. Free admission ($5 donation suggested). Carriage, tram, and hay wagon rides $3 adults, $2 children. Grounds daily 10am–5pm. House Tues–Sun noon–5pm (last house tour 4:30pm). Guided 25-min. house tours depart every half-hour. Go south to the end of Boulevard; follow signs to the parking area.

Wilton House Museum Originally built on the James River about 14 miles below Richmond, this 1753 Georgian mansion was painstakingly dismantled and reconstructed on this bluff overlooking the river in 1933. Most of the original brick, flooring, and paneling were saved. Wilton's design has been attributed to Williamsburg architect Richard Taliaferro. It was part of a 2,000-acre plantation where William Randolph III entertained many of the leading figures of the day, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Lafayette. The house has a fine collection of period furnishings based on an 1815 inventory. All rooms feature pine paneling, some with fluted pilasters and denticulate cornices.

215 S. Wilton Rd. (off W. Cary St.). ✆ **804/282-5936.** www.wiltonhousemuseum.org. Admission $10 adults, $8 seniors and students, free for children 5 and younger. Tues–Fri 1–4:30pm, Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 1:30–4:30pm; Feb by appt. only. Tours depart continuously every 45 min. Closed national holidays. Take Va. 147 (W. Cary St.) west and turn south on Wilton Rd.

SPECIAL-INTEREST MUSEUMS

Built by Richmond's Jewish community, one of the oldest in the United States, the **Virginia Holocaust Museum,** 2000 E. Cary St. (✆ **804/257-5400;** www.va-holocaust.com), in Tobacco Row between 20th and 21st streets, honors those who died in or lived through the Holocaust. Local survivors tell their stories in the moving Survivors' Room. There's also a mock ghetto surrounded by barbed wire and a model of an underground hiding place. Admission is free, but donations are encouraged. The museum is open Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 5pm.

In Jackson Ward, the **Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia,** 00 Clay St. (yes, that's the address), at Foushee Street (✆ **804/780-9093;** www.blackhistorymuseum.org), houses documents, limited editions, prints, art, and photos emphasizing the history of the state's African-American community. It's in a Federal–Greek Revival–style house built in 1832 and purchased a century later by the Council of Colored Women under the leadership of Maggie L. Walker. Admission is $5 adults, $4 seniors, $3 for children 11 and under. It's open Tuesday through Saturday 10am to 5pm.

The lobby of the **Library of Virginia,** 800 Broad St., between 8th and 9th streets (✆ **804/692-3919;** www.lva.lib.va.us), has changing exhibits of state documents and published works, some of them more than 400 years old. Containing papers going back to the 1600s, the library's records are a treasure trove for genealogists. It's open Monday through Saturday from 9am to 5pm; admission is free.

Although it is minuscule when compared to the National Air and Space Museum's monstrous Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in the Hunt Country (p. 88) or the fine Virginia Air & Space Center in Hampton (p. 283), the **Virginia Aviation Museum,** 5701 Huntsman Rd. (✆ **804/236-3622;** www.vam.smv.org), on the grounds of Richmond International Airport, does have some beautifully restored craft dating from 1916 to 1946 plus a SR-71 Blackbird spy plane. The museum is a division of the Science Museum of Virginia (see "Cool Richmond Stuff for Kids," above). Admission is $6 adults, $5 seniors and kids 4 to 12. It's open Tuesday through Saturday 9:30am to 5pm, Sunday noon to 5pm (closed Thanksgiving and Christmas).

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

About 14 miles north of Richmond via I-95, the neighboring communities of **Ashland** (on U.S. 1) and **Hanover** (on U.S. 301) have deep historical roots. Patrick Henry once tended bar at Hanover Tavern, built in 1723, and argued cases in the Hanover County Courthouse, dating from 1735. For more information contact the **Ashland/Hanover Visitor Center,** 112 N. Railroad Ave. in Hanover (✆ **800/897-1479** or 804/752-6766; www.town.ashland.va.us). Hours are daily 9am to 5pm except major holidays.

Kings Dominion Kids This 400-acre fanciful facility is one of the most popular theme parks on the East Coast. Although it offers a wide variety of attractions, it's principally known for its thrill rides and water park. It's especially famous for having one of the largest roller coaster collections on the East Coast (you can spend all day here just being jolted up and down). Almost like its own theme park, the splash-happy **WaterWorks** features two monstrous wave pools and White Water Canyon, a wet-and-wild ride simulating white-water rafting. Most rides are included in the price of admission but some cost extra, which can throw a wrench into a well-planned budget. See "Getting Your Money's Worth in Kings Dominion," below, for advice from two veteran visitors.

Best Western Kings Quarters, 16102 Theme Park Way, Doswell, VA 23047 (✆ **804/876-3321;** www.bestwesternkingsquarters.com), offers accommodations on-site.

Tips Getting Your Money's Worth in Kings Dominion

My friend Tatyana Hillock and her daughter, Jennifer, have visited **Kings Dominion** several times and give this advice: The park is huge, so arrive early and spend all day to get your money's worth, but wear comfy shoes or sandals as you will be on your feet most of the day. Lines for the rides are shorter on weekdays and after 7pm on weekends; it's also cooler after 7pm in summer. Food, drinks, and bottled water are costly inside the park, but there are inexpensive fast-food outlets across the parking lot, and you can refill empty water bottles at any park restaurant. The park's coin-operated vending machines don't always work properly. Spectacular July 4th fireworks are best seen from the parking lot, where no crowds or buildings block your view. Tatyana closes her eyes to avoid fright on the coasters, but 12-year-old Jennifer says she keeps hers wide open!

Doswell, VA. ✆ **804/876-5000.** www.kingsdominion.com. Admission changes annually, usually about $45 ($32 after 4pm) ages 3–61 and at least 48 in. tall, $32 seniors and anyone else under 48 in. tall, free for children 2 and under. Season and multi-day passes available. Some rides cost extra. Hours generally Memorial Day to Labor Day daily 10:30am to 9 or 10pm; Apr–May and day after Labor Day to late Oct Sat–Sun 10:30am–8pm. Take Va. 30 (Exit 98) off I-95.

Scotchtown ★ One of Virginia's oldest plantation houses, Scotchtown is a charming one-story white-clapboard home. Charles Chiswell of Williamsburg built it around 1719, but it's best known as a residence of Patrick Henry, who lived here from 1771 to 1778 with his wife, Sarah, and their six children. Henry served as governor of Virginia during those years, but sadly, Sarah was mentally ill during much of that time and eventually confined to a room in the basement. Although Henry last lived at Red Hill near Lynchburg (p. 139), this is the only house he ever occupied that is still standing. Henry's mahogany desk-table still bears his ink stains, and bookshelves hold his law books. Dolley Madison, whose mother was a first cousin to Patrick Henry, and her mother lived here while their family moved back to this area from North Carolina. Unlike so many historic houses, none of the rooms here are roped off.

16120 Chiswell Lane, Beaverdam. ✆ **804/227-3500.** www.apva.org/scotchtown. Admission $7 adults, $5 seniors, $4 students 6–18, free for children 5 and younger; grounds only $3 per person. Mar–Dec Fri–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm; Jan–Feb by appt. only. 1-hr. house tours depart on demand. Closed Easter, Mother's Day, July 4th. From Ashland follow Va. 54 west, turn right on Scotchtown Road (C.R. 671) north, take right fork on C.R. 685.

5 SPORTS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

SPECTATOR SPORTS

AUTO RACING See NASCAR racing at **Richmond International Raceway,** between Laburnum Avenue and the Henrico Turnpike/Meadowbridge Road (✆ **804/329-6796;** www.rir.com). The raceway is Virginia's largest sports facility, attracting crowds of 70,000 or more. Unless you're a NASCAR fan, check the website and avoid being in Richmond on race weekends, when accommodations are scarce.

COLLEGE SPORTS The **University of Richmond**'s Spiders play football and basketball in the **Colonial Athletic Association** (✆ **804/289-8388;** www.richmondspiders.com). **Virginia Commonwealth University**'s Rams play basketball at the **Coliseum** (✆ **804/282-7267;** www.vcuathletics.com).

HORSE RACING Virginia's only parimutuel racetrack, **Colonial Downs,** is on Va. 155, between I-64 (Exit 205) and U.S. 60 in New Kent County, 25 miles east of Richmond (✆ **888/482-8722** or 804/966-7223; www.colonialdowns.com). Call or check the website for schedules and ticket prices.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

GOLF Golf courses abound in the Richmond area. Among them are the public **Belmont Park Recreation Center,** 1800 Hilliard Rd. (✆ **804/266-4929;** www.vrps.com), and semi-private **Glenwood Golf Club,** Creighton Road (✆ **804/226-1793;** www.glenwoodgolfclub.com).

6 SHOPPING

Richmond's neighborhoods have a number of specialty shops, including those mentioned below. The visitor centers provide brochures that cover these and many other stores around the city and out in the suburbs.

For distinctive souvenirs, don't forget museum gift shops, especially those at the Science Museum, Art Museum, Museum and White House of the Confederacy, Valentine Richmond History Museum, and the Virginia Children's Museum.

There are upscale shops along East Cary Street in Shockoe Slip, but the best place in town for a pleasant shopping stroll is in **Carytown,** the 7 blocks of West Cary Street between Boulevard and Nasemond Street that are lined with a mix of interesting stores. **Ten Thousand Villages,** 3201 W. Cary St. (✆ **804/358-5170**), carries international handcrafts, with lots of baskets and primitive pottery.

You'll also find gourmet food shops, ethnic restaurants, secondhand clothing stores, and the landmark **Byrd Theater,** which shows second-run films at discount prices.

7 RICHMOND AFTER DARK

Richmond is no New York or London, so you won't be attending internationally recognized theaters and music halls. Nevertheless, you might be able to catch visiting productions and artists at several venues. The city has its own ballet company and theater groups, and pierced-set bands rock Shockoe Bottom.

Current entertainment schedules can be found in the Thursday "Weekend" section of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (www.timesdispatch.com), the city's daily newspaper. The free tabloid *Style Weekly* (www.styleweekly.com) has details on theater, concerts, dance performances, and other happenings. It's widely available at the visitor centers and in hotel lobbies.

THE PERFORMING ARTS

The city's version of the Lincoln and Kennedy centers in New York and Washington, respectively, is the dazzling new **Richmond CenterStage** ★★, 600 E. Grace St., between 6th and 7th streets (✆ **804/327-5755;** www.richmondcenterstage.com). Occupying the Thalhimers original downtown department store building and the renovated **Carpenter Theatre,** the complex hosts Broadway shows, touring artists, and performances by the **Richmond Ballet** (✆ **804/359-0906;** www.richmondballet.com); the **Virginia Opera** (✆ **804/643-6004;** www.vaopera.org); the **Richmond Symphony** (✆ **804/788-1212;** www.richmondsymphony.com), and the **Richmond Philharmonic** (✆ **804/673-7400;** www.richmondphilharmonic.org).

Next to the Greater Richmond Convention Center, the **Richmond Coliseum,** 601 E. Leigh St. (✆ **804/780-4970;** www.richmondcoliseum.net), presents everything from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus to rock concerts. It seats about 12,000. Major sporting events—wrestling, ice hockey, and basketball—are also scheduled.

In the summer months, Richmond goes outdoors to **Dogwood Dell Festival of the Arts** in Byrd Park, at Boulevard and Idlewild Avenue (✆ **804/646-3355;** www.ci.richmond.va.us/parks/dogwood.aspx), for free music and drama under the stars in this tiered grassy amphitheater. Bring the family, spread a blanket, and enjoy a picnic.

Tips Fun Freebies

A nonprofit organization called **Venture Richmond** (✆ **804/788-6466;** www.venturerichmond.com) keeps Richmond hopping with a series of free outdoor concerts, beer blasts, and street festivals from May through September. Check the website for what's happening.

The nonprofit **Theatre IV** (✆ **804/344-8040;** www.theatreiv.org) stages family-oriented performances in the **Empire Theater,** 114 W. Broad St., at Jefferson Street. Dating from 1911, the Empire is the oldest theater in Virginia.

Virginia Commonwealth University presents a wide range of performances at its **W. E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts,** 922 Park Ave., at Harrison Street (✆ **804/828-6776;** www.vcumusic.org). Likewise at the University of Richmond's **Modlin Center for the Arts** (✆ **804/289-8980;** www.modlin.richmond.edu), which does not have a street address but is on Crenshaw Way off Westhampton Way.

Tickets for most events are available through **Ticketmaster** (✆ **804/262-8003;** www.ticketmaster.com).

THE CLUB & MUSIC SCENE

Shockoe Bottom is the city's funky nightlife district, although the usual weekend revelers are more likely to have pierced eyebrows than packed wallets. It occupies the square block beginning with the 17th Street Farmer's Market going east along East Main and East Franklin streets to 18th Street. Its joints attract the "let's see your ID" crowd, and they go up and down in popularity. If you can find a parking space, you can see for yourself what's going on by barhopping around Shockoe Bottom's busy block (but *do not* wander off onto deserted streets). ***Note:*** Many Shockoe Bottom establishments are closed on Sunday and Monday.

Up Cary Street in the more affluent (and well-behaved) Shockoe Slip, several restaurants and pubs have live music, including **The Tobacco Company,** 1201 E. Cary St. (✆ **804/782-9555**), which has acoustic jazz upstairs Tuesday through Saturday and dancing downstairs Wednesday through Saturday from 8pm to 1am.

Many other restaurants and bars have live music, especially on weekends.

Check the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (www.timesdispatch.com) and *Style Weekly* (www.styleweekly.com) for who's playing where.

8 AN EASY EXCURSION TO PETERSBURG ★★

After his frontal assaults failed to capture Richmond in 1864, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant recognized that the key to victory was Petersburg, a vital rail junction on the Appomattox River 23 miles south of the Confederate capital. Moving his troops south across the James River at Hopewell east of Richmond, he advanced on Petersburg, hoping thus to cut off Gen. Robert E. Lee's supplies and starve him into submission. The ever-wily Lee quickly countered, however, and the tragic 10-month Siege of Petersburg ensued. Finally, on April 2, 1865, a Union assault smashed through Lee's right flank, at what is now a fine privately funded memorial park. Lee retreated west that very night and surrendered

a week later at Appomattox Court House (see "Attractions in the Lynchburg Area," in chapter 7).

Sitting at the strategic junction of interstates 95 and 85, Petersburg today is a quiet Southern city. Although much of its downtown business district has a down-on-its-heels appearance, the Old Town section near the river is undergoing a restoration and has several antiques stores, restaurants, and two Civil War–era museums. The major sights, however, are on Petersburg's eastern and southern outskirts, where the battle lines were drawn.

VISITOR INFORMATION When you arrive, take Washington Street (Exit 52) west and follow the Petersburg Tour signs to the **Petersburg Visitor Center,** 19 Bollingbrook St., Petersburg, VA 23804 (✆ **800/368-3595** or 804/733-2430; www.petersburg-va.org). Follow the signs from the Washington Street exit. There you can get maps and literature and buy a block ticket to local museums (see below). The center is open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm, Sunday 1 to 5pm.

Information also is available from **Petersburg Area Regional Tourism,** P.O. Box 1776, Petersburg, VA 23805 (✆ **877/730-7278;** www.petersburgarea.org).

EXPLORING OLD TOWN PETERSBURG

Old Town's top attraction is the **Siege Museum,** 15 W. Bank St. (✆ **804/733-2404;** www.craterroad.com/siegemuseum.html), occupying the old Merchant Exchange, a magnificent Greek Revival temple-fronted building. It tells the story of everyday life in Petersburg up to and during the siege in displays and an interesting 18-minute film narrated by the late actor Joseph Cotten, a Virginia native whose ancestors lived in Petersburg during the Civil War. The film is shown on the hour and half-hour. Give yourself another 30 minutes to see the museum.

Centre Hill Mansion, 1 Centre Hill Circle (✆ **804/733-2401**), between Adams and Tabb streets, is a nicely restored 1823 mansion furnished with Victorian pieces. You'll have to take a 30-minute tour (departing every hour 10:30am–4:30pm).

The Siege Museum and Centre Hill Mansion are open April to September Monday to Saturday from 10am to 5pm, October to December Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, and January to March Tuesday from 1 to 5pm; year-round they are open Sunday from 1 to 5pm.

The visitor center sells **block tickets** to the Siege Museum, Centre Hill Mansion, and Old Blandford Church (see below) for $11 adults, $9 seniors and children 7 to 12. Otherwise, admission to each is $5 adults, $4 seniors and children. Active-duty military personnel pay the seniors/children rate.

THE CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS

Together, the sites below will take most of a day to tour. After a look around Old Town, drive out to the national battlefield's visitor center east of the city and follow the one-way tour to The Crater. You'll come out of the national battlefield at Crater Road (U.S. 301); Old Blandford Church is a quarter-mile north. Have lunch at King's Barbecue, which is on Crater Road south of I-95 (see "Where to Stay & Dine," below). Spend the afternoon at Pamplin Historical Park.

Old Blandford Church ★ About 2 miles south of downtown, this ancient church boasts one of the largest collections of Tiffany-glass windows in existence and is noted for the first observance of Memorial Day. The church was constructed in 1735 of imported English brick but abandoned in the early 1800s. During the Civil War, the building

Fun Facts The First Memorial Day

After the Civil War, a group of Petersburg schoolgirls and their teacher came to Old Blandford Church to decorate the graves of the soldiers buried in the churchyard. The ceremony inspired Mary Logan, wife of Union Gen. John A. Logan, who was head of the major organization of Union army veterans, to campaign for a national Memorial Day, which was first observed in 1868.

became a hospital for wounded soldiers. Many were later buried in the 189-acre graveyard, whose oldest gravestone dates from 1702. The 13 Confederate and border states each sponsored one of the Tiffany windows as a memorial to its Confederate dead. The local Ladies Memorial Association commissioned the 14th window. The artist himself, Louis Comfort Tiffany, gave the church the 15th window, a magnificent "Cross of Jewels" that is thrillingly illuminated at sunset. You can visit the parklike graveyard on your own, but the only way to see inside the church is on a 45-minute guided tour.

319 S. Crater Rd. (U.S. 301; at Rochelle Lane). ✆ **804/733-2396.** www.petersburg-va.org/tourism/blandford.htm. Admission $5 adults, $4 seniors and children. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Oct–Dec Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, and Jan–Mar Tues 1–5pm; year-round Sun 1–5pm. 30-min. tours depart every 45 min. From downtown take Bank St. east and turn right on Crater Rd. (U.S. 301).

Pamplin Historical Park & The National Museum of the Civil War Soldier ★ The Petersburg Breakthrough Battle, where Union troops ended the siege by breaking through the Confederate lines on April 2, 1865, occurred on the grounds of this privately owned park, home to some of Virginia's best-preserved Confederate earthwork fortifications. There's a re-created Military Encampment with costumed interpreters and a Battlefield Center with artifacts and exhibits about the battle. Guides lead 30- to 45-minute walking tours of the battlefield at least once a day; call for times since the tours will add immeasurably to your visit. The nearby **Banks House** served as Grant's headquarters. One of Virginia's few remaining slave dwellings is behind the house. You start all this at the **National Museum of the Civil War Soldier,** which is dedicated to the common foot soldier (no famous generals need apply). The Field Quarter interprets what slave life was like in the 19th century.

6125 Boydton Plank Rd. (U.S. 1). ✆ **877/726-7546** or 804/861-2408. www.pamplinpark.org. Admission $20 adults, $5 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Tues–Sun 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. Park is 6 miles south of downtown, 1 mile south of Exit 61 off I-85.

Petersburg National Battlefield Park ★★★ Wrapping around the city's eastern and southern flanks, this park preserves the key sites of the siege that lasted from mid-June 1864 to early April 1865. The main visitor center (on Va. 36) displays exhibits and artifacts, while a one-way 4-mile battlefield driving tour has wayside exhibits; some stops have short walking trails. The last and most fascinating is the site of The Crater, literally a depression blown into the ground when a group of miners from Pennsylvania dug a passage beneath Confederate lines and exploded 4 tons of powder, creating the 170×60-foot crater. The explosion killed 278 Confederates, and, during the ensuing battle, thousands more men on both sides were killed or wounded. To get a fuller perspective, follow the entire siege line from the Eastern Front visitor center 26 miles south to Five Forks Battlefield in Dinwiddie County. Admission includes an extremely helpful audio tour of the battle lines.

Also part of the park is **Grant's Headquarters at City Point,** at present-day Hopewell, 26 miles to the east via Va. 36. City Point was the largest Union supply base during the war. Abraham Lincoln spent 2 of the last 3 weeks of his life there.

5001 Siege Rd. (Va. 36; 2½ miles east of downtown via E. Washington St.). ✆ **804/732-3531.** www.nps.gov/pete. Admission $5 per vehicle, $3 per pedestrian or bicyclist. Park daily 8am–dusk; museum daily 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

ATTRACTIONS AT FORT LEE

Fort Lee is home to the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps and its **Quartermaster Museum** (✆ **804/734-4203;** www.qmmuseum.lee.army.mil), which has uniforms and equipment from all of America's wars. Stars of the show are the World War II jeep with a Mercedes car seat specially installed for Gen. George S. Patton and one of the armored "Circus Wagons" in which Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower lived when on the road in Europe during the war. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday 10am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 5pm. Admission is free.

Next door, the **U.S. Army Women's Museum** (✆ **804/734-4327;** www.awm.lee.army.mil) is the only facility in the world dedicated to army women. It traces their contributions from the Revolution to the present. If you, a relative, or another woman you know was in the army, especially during World War II, then this is a poignant stop. It's open Tuesday through Friday from 10am to 5pm and Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays from 11am to 5pm. Admission is free.

The gate into Fort Lee is a mile east of the national battlefield visitor center on Va. 36. This is an active U.S. army post, so you must show valid photo identification, and you and your vehicle also are subject to being searched. Tell the guards at the gate that you want to visit the Quartermaster Museum and the U.S. Army Women's Museum, and they'll tell you how to get there.

WHERE TO STAY

National chain motels near I-95 and Washington Street (Exit 52) include aging editions of **Ramada Plaza** (✆ 800/272-6232 or 804/733-0000), **Super 8** (✆ 800/800-8000 or 804/861-0793), and **Travelodge** (✆ 800/578-7878 or 804/732-7836).

Several motels on South Crater Road are less convenient to downtown but are newer than those at Exit 52. These include **Comfort Inn Petersburg** (✆ 804/732-2000), **Days Inn Petersburg-Fort Lee/South** (✆ 804/733-4400), **Econo Lodge South** (✆ 804/862-2717), **Hampton Inn Petersburg-Fort Lee** (✆ 804/732-1400), **Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Petersburg-Fort Lee** (✆ 804/518-1800), **Howard Johnson Inn Petersburg** (✆ 804/733-0600), and **Quality Inn Petersburg** (✆ 804/732-2900).

WHERE TO DINE

As you tour Old Town, you can fuel up on pastries and caffeine at **Java Mio,** 322 N. Sycamore St. (✆ **804/861-1646**), a trendy coffeehouse offering sandwiches and salads for lunch plus dinner and live music on Friday night.

Worthy Old Town restaurants include **The Brickhouse Run,** 407-409 Cockade Alley (✆ **804/862-1825**), a British pub which is open Tuesday through Saturday, and **Andrade's International Restaurant,** 7 Bollingbrook St. (✆ **804/862-1365**), with a wide-ranging menu and patio dining in warm weather. Andrade's is open daily.

Near The Crater and Old Blandford Church, **King's Barbecue,** 2910 S. Crater Rd. (✆ **804/732-0975**), has the same offerings and prices as Eley's Barbecue (below).

244 Eley's Barbecue ★★ (Value) AMERICAN Formerly known as King's Barbecue, this Petersburg institution has been supplying some of Virginia's best barbecue since 1946. The setting is a pine-paneled room adorned with an extraordinary collection of pig dolls and figurines. Pork, beef, ribs, and chicken smoke constantly in an open pit right in the dining room. Unlike most other barbecue emporia, the meat is served just as it comes from the pit. Aficionados can enjoy the smoked flavor *au naturel* or apply vinegary sauce from squeeze bottles. The menu also offers such Southern standbys as crispy fried chicken, ham steak, and seafood items like salmon cakes and fried oysters.

3221 W. Washington St. (U.S. 1 South). ✆ **804/732-5861.** Sandwiches $3–$7.50; main courses $7–$19. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 7am–8:30pm. Follow U.S. 1 South to the city limits, 3 miles from downtown.

11

Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown

In many respects a visit to Virginia is a great big history lesson, and nowhere is that more true than on the Peninsula, stretching southeast from Richmond between the James and York rivers.

This area saw not just the establishment of English-speaking Colonial America at Jamestown in 1607; it watched as its citizens gathered in Williamsburg to help foment the Revolution, which ended here with the deciding Battle of Yorktown. Today that history comes alive in the "Historic Triangle" of Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown.

You will learn all you can absorb at Colonial Williamsburg's beautifully restored Historic Area. At Jamestown you will see where the first English settlers landed, examine archaeological artifacts uncovered from their first fort, and visit re-creations of the ships they came in and the village they built. At Yorktown you will walk the ramparts from which Washington bombarded Cornwallis into submission, thus turning the colonists' dream of a new nation into a reality. Along the James River you will tour the tobacco plantations that created Virginia's first great wealth.

At the eastern end of the Peninsula, where it meets the Chesapeake Bay, Hampton is America's oldest continuously English-speaking town, but it also has a modern air-and-space museum. In the shipbuilding city of Newport News, one of the country's finest maritime museums displays part of the USS *Monitor,* whose Civil War battle with the CSS *Merrimac* out on Hampton Roads was the world's first engagement between ironclad ships.

As soon as the kids become bored with all that history, you can take them to the Busch Gardens Williamsburg theme park and the thoroughly wet Water Country USA, which help make this one of America's family vacation meccas.

It's also a bargain-hunter's paradise, with numerous outlet stores west of Williamsburg. And golfers can play some of the country's finest courses.

1 GETTING THERE

BY PLANE **Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport (PHF),** 14 miles east of Williamsburg (✆ **757/877-0221;** www.nnwairport.com), is served by AirTran, Delta, and US Airways. The major car rental firms have desks at the airport, and taxis await each incoming flight.

More flights arrive at **Richmond International Airport** (see chapter 10), about 45 miles west of town via I-64. **Norfolk International Airport** (see chapter 12) is about the same distance to the east, but traffic on I-64 can cause delays in ground transport to Williamsburg during rush hours, especially on summer weekends when beach traffic funnels through the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel.

BY CAR The main drag is **I-64,** which runs down the center of the Peninsula between Richmond and Hampton. When traffic on I-64 comes to a standstill, as it often does on

summer weekends, you can take the mostly four-lane **U.S. 60,** which parallels it. The two-lane John Tyler Highway (Va. 5) also runs between Richmond and Williamsburg, passing the James River plantations (see section 5). The scenic **Colonial Parkway** connects Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown. Va. 199 runs around the southern side of Williamsburg, and when combined with I-64 forms a beltway around the town.

BY TRAIN & BUS Both **Amtrak** trains (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) and **Greyhound** buses (✆ **800/231-2222;** www.greyhound.com) arrive at the local **Transportation Center** (✆ **757/229-8750**), at Boundary and Lafayette streets within walking distance of Williamsburg's Historic Area.

Colonial Rent-a-Car (✆ **800/899-2271** or 757/220-3399; www.colonialrentacar.com) has a booth at the center. Cab service is provided by **Historic Taxi** (✆ **757/258-7755**), **Williamsburg Taxi Service** (✆ **757/254-2190**), and **Yellow Cab of Williamsburg** (✆ **757/722-1111**).

2 WILLIAMSBURG ★★★

150 miles S of Washington, D.C.; 50 miles E of Richmond

"I know of no way of judging the future," said Patrick Henry, "but by the past." That particular quotation couldn't be more fitting as an introduction to Williamsburg, since Henry played an important role here when, as a 29-year-old backcountry lawyer, he spoke out against the Stamp Act in the House of Burgesses in 1765. Many considered him an upstart and called the speech traitorous; others were inspired to revolution.

You'll never have a better opportunity to examine the past than in Colonial Williamsburg, as the town's restored Historic Area is known. Unlike most other historical attractions in Virginia, Williamsburg has not just been meticulously re-created to look exactly as it did in the 1770s, when the town served as Virginia's capital. Today, Williamsburg's Historic Area is, for all practical purposes, one of the world's largest and best living-history museums.

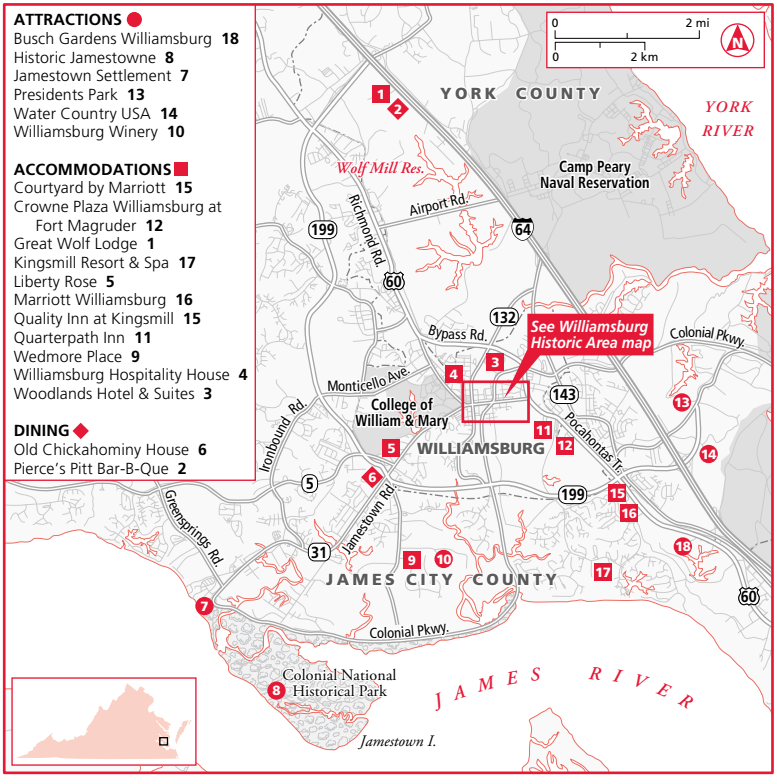
Here the British flag flies most of the year over the Capitol building. Women wear long dresses and ruffled caps, and men don powdered wigs. Taverns serve Colonial fare, blacksmiths and harness makers use 18th-century methods, and the local militia drills on Market Square. Clip-clopping horses draw carriages just as their ancestors did when George Washington rode these streets. Your impromptu banter with "Thomas Jefferson" in the King's Arms Tavern will seem so authentic you won't even notice it's Bill Barker, an actor/interpreter who has been bringing Jefferson to life since 1993.

Youngsters will enjoy watching a musket being fired and being locked up in the town's stocks, but they might otherwise become a bit bored with all the talk about history and start badgering you to get on to Busch Gardens Williamsburg. But it's worth the effort, for both you and they will come away with an understanding and appreciation of life in 18th-century Virginia, before the advent of running water and video games.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

For advance information specific to the Historic Area, contact the **Colonial Williamsburg Foundation,** P.O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187 (✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/220-7645; www.history.org). Open 365 days a year, the foundation's visitor center



is both a font of information and the beginning of any visit here (see "Exploring the Historic Area," below). There also is a regional information desk in the visitor center.

The next-best source for general information about the hotels, restaurants, and activities is the **Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance,** 421 N. Boundary St., Williamsburg, VA 23187 (✆ **800/368-6511** or 757/229-6511; fax 757/253-1397; www.williamsburgcc.com), between Lafayette and Scotland streets, 2 blocks north of the Historic Area. The alliance sells one of the best maps of the area, and you can search for money-saving package deals on its website. The office is open Monday through Friday 8:30am to 5pm.

The **Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association** (✆ **800/211-7165;** www.gowilliamsburg.com) publishes its own visitors guide and operates a hotel and motel reservation service in conjunction with the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance (see "Where to Stay," later).

Arriving

Amtrak Trains and Greyhound buses arrive at the **Transportation Center** (✆ **757/229-8750**), at Boundary and Lafayette streets. See section 1 for air, train, and bus links and taxi companies in Williamsburg.

Williamsburg is on I-64 about halfway between Richmond and Norfolk. For the Historic Area, take Exit 238 (Va. 143) off I-64 and follow the signs south to Va. 132 and Colonial Williamsburg. The visitor center will be on your left as you approach the town. Va. 199, which forms a beltway around the southern side of the city, joins I-64 at Exit 242 east of town; this is the quickest way to get to Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Water Country USA. The scenic Colonial Parkway runs through a tunnel under the Historic Area; you can get on and off at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center.

Orientation

The 1-mile-long-by-half-mile-wide restored **Historic Area** is at the center of Williamsburg. The 99-foot-wide **Duke of Gloucester Street** is this area's principal east-west artery, with the Capitol building at the eastern end and the Wren building of the College of William and Mary at the west end. **Merchants Square** shops and services are on the western end of Duke of Gloucester Street, next to the college. The visitor center is north of the Historic Area.

Richmond Road (U.S. 60 W.) runs northwest from the Historic Area and is Williamsburg's main commercial strip, with numerous motels, restaurants, and shopping centers, including the area's outlet malls. On the east side of town, **York Street/Pocahontas Trail** (U.S. 60 E.) goes out to Busch Gardens Williamsburg. **Bypass Road** joins these two highways on the north side of the Historic Area.

Getting Around the Historic Area

Because cars are not allowed into the Historic Area between 8am and 10pm, you must park elsewhere. The Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center (see "Exploring the Historic Area," below) has ample free parking. After you have bought your tickets, you can use them to ride Colonial Williamsburg's shuttle buses from the visitor center to and around the Historic Area (only ticket holders are allowed on these buses). The buses will take you between the visitor center and the **Gateway Building,** behind the Governor's Palace, where guides conduct a 30-minute Orientation Walk. It's a good way to get an overview of the village. From there, the buses make a circle around the circumference of the Historic Area. The buses begin operating at 8:50am, with frequent departures until 10pm. The two lines merge after 5pm, forming one loop around the area.

You can also walk from the visitor center to the Historic Area, a 20-minute stroll via a footpath.

Getting Around Williamsburg

The easiest way to get around outside the Historic Area is by trolley and public buses operated by **Williamsburg Area Transport** (**WAT; ✆ 757/259-4093;** www.williamsburgtransport.com). Newest addition to the fleet is the **Williamsburg Trolley,** which runs from Merchants Square west on Richmond Road to High Street, then southwest to the New Town shopping area on Ironbound Road at Monticello Avenue near Va. 199. Fare is 25¢, with exact change required.

Not to be confused with Colonial Williamsburg's shuttles in the Historic District, WAT's buses run around the town and surrounding area Monday through Saturday about every hour from 6am to 8pm, to 10pm during the summer months. Bus fare is $1.25. Exact fare is required. The **Blue Line** runs west from the Transportation Center and passes a majority of the area's motels, chain restaurants, and shopping centers on Richmond Road (U.S. 60 W.). The **Gray Line** operates east from the Transportation Center to Busch Gardens via Lafayette Street and Pocahontas Trail (U.S. 60 E.). The

Yellow Line links the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center to the Transportation Center and Busch Gardens from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The land is flat here, so getting around via bicycle is a great idea. **Bike rentals** are available from Easter through October at the **Woodlands Hotel & Suites,** at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center (✆ **757/220-7960;** p. 250).

Historic Taxi (✆ **757/258-7755**), **Williamsburg Taxi Service** (✆ **757/254-2190**), and **Yellow Cab of Williamsburg** (✆ **757/722-1111**) are based at the Transportation Center (see "Getting There," above).

Getting to Jamestown & Yorktown

Other than driving, the easiest way to get from Williamsburg to Jamestown and Yorktown from March 16 through November 1 is via the **Historic Triangle Shuttle** (✆ **757/898-2410**), which follows the Colonial Parkway. The buses depart the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center daily every 30 minutes from 9am to 3:30pm, with the final return trips departing Jamestown and Yorktown at 5:15pm. The rides cost $2 each way but are free with admission to Colonial Williamsburg, Historic Jamestowne, and Yorktown Battlefield (see sections 3 and 4, respectively). Save your admission tickets.

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

In 1699, after nearly a century of famine, fevers, and battles with neighboring American Indian tribes, the beleaguered Virginia Colony abandoned the mosquito-infested swamp at Jamestown for a planned city 6 miles inland and about halfway to Yorktown, which had developed as a major seaport. They named it Williamsburg for the reigning British monarch, William of Orange.

Royal Gov. Francis Nicholson laid out the new capital on a grid with public greens and a half-acre of land for every house on the main street. People used their lots to grow vegetables and raise livestock. Most houses were whitewashed wood frame (trees being more abundant than brick), and kitchens were in separate structures to keep the houses from burning down. A "palace" for the royal governor was finished in 1720.

The town prospered and became the major cultural and political center of Virginia. The government met here four times a year during "Publick Times," when rich planters and politicos (one and the same, mostly) converged on Williamsburg and the population, normally about 1,800, doubled. Shops displayed their finest wares, and there were balls, horse races, fairs, and auctions.

Williamsburg played a major role as a seat of royal government and later as a hotbed of revolution until the government was moved to Richmond in 1780 to be safer from British attack. Many of the seminal events leading up to the Declaration of Independence occurred here. Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe studied at the College of William

Fun Facts **Learning Lord's Lines**

You'll see a familiar face in *Williamsburg—the Story of a Patriot,* the 35-minute film shown at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center—and on TVs in hotels operated by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. It's Jack Lord, who later became famous as the detective in the 1970s TV show *Hawaii 5-0.* Students at the College of William and Mary consider the 1950s film so campy that they learn every one of Lord's lines by heart.

and Mary, the nation's second-oldest university behind Harvard. Jefferson was the second state governor and last occupant of the Governor's Palace before the capital moved to Richmond (Patrick Henry was the first). During the Revolution, Williamsburg was the headquarters of first Cornwallis, then Washington and Rochambeau, who planned the siege of Yorktown in George Wythe's house.

A Reverend, a Rockefeller & a Rebirth

Williamsburg ceased to be an important political center after 1780 but remained a charming Virginia town for another 150 years or so. As late as 1926, the Colonial town plan was virtually intact, including numerous original buildings. Then the Reverend W. A. R. Goodwin, rector of **Bruton Parish Church** (and no known relation to yours truly), envisioned restoring the entire town to its Colonial appearance as a symbol of our early history. He inspired John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who during his lifetime contributed some $68 million to the project and set up an endowment to help provide for permanent restoration and educational programs. Today, gifts and bequests by thousands of Americans sustain the project Goodwin and Rockefeller began.

The Historic Area now covers 301 acres of the original town. A mile long, it encompasses 88 original buildings and several hundred reconstructed houses, shops, taverns, public buildings, and outbuildings, most on their original foundations after extensive archaeological, architectural, and historical research.

Williamsburg set a very high standard for other Virginia restorations. Researchers investigated international archives, libraries, and museums and sought out old wills, diaries, court records, inventories, letters, and other documents. The architects studied every aspect of 18th-century buildings, from paint chemistry to brickwork. Archaeologists recovered millions of artifacts excavating 18th-century sites to reveal original foundations. The Historic Area also includes 90 acres of gardens and greens, and 3,000 surrounding acres serve as a "greenbelt" against commercial encroachment.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, a nonprofit organization, owns most of the Historic Area, conducts the ongoing restoration, and operates the Historic Area and its visitor center. A profit-making subsidiary owns and operates the foundation's hotels and taverns. Needless to say, "CW" exerts enormous influence over tourism, the town's main income earner.

EXPLORING THE HISTORIC AREA

First Stop: The Visitor Center

Begin your visit at the **Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center,** on Va. 132 south of U.S. 60 Bypass (✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/220-7645; www.history.org). Watch for the signs pointing the way from all access roads to Williamsburg. The center and Historic Area attractions are open daily 9am to 5pm (to 9pm in summer). Some attractions are closed on specific days, and hours can vary, so check the *This Week* brochure (available at the visitor center) for current information.

The visitor center has a bookstore, a coffee shop, a regional information desk, and two **reservations services:** one for Colonial Williamsburg Foundation **hotels** (✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/220-7645; www.history.org), the other for two of its four Colonial **taverns** (✆ **800/828-3767** or 757/229-2141). It's advisable to make tavern reservations well in advance anytime, and it's essential every day during the summer and on weekends during spring and fall (see "The Early Bird Gets the Reservation," later in this chapter).

Tips Planning Your Time in Williamsburg

There is so much to see and do in the Historic Triangle that you can easily spend a week in this area and still not see everything. Colonial Williamsburg itself requires a minimum of 2 days to explore, preferably 3. It will take at least another day to see Jamestown and Yorktown. If you have kids in tow, they'll want to spend a day at Busch Gardens Williamsburg or Water Country USA, although you can satisfy them by visiting the parks after dark during the summer months.

Spend ample time planning your visit at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center. Historic Area programs change frequently, so it's imperative to pick up a copy of ***This Week,*** the single most valuable tool in planning the best use of your time. It gives the hours the attractions are open and the times and places of the week's presentations, exhibits, plays, and events. It also has a detailed map.

The center continuously shows a free 8-minute video about Williamsburg, and once you've bought your ticket, you can watch the 35-minute orientation film, *Williamsburg—The Story of a Patriot,* which also runs throughout the day.

Parking at the visitor center is free. You can park for an hour for free, and then pay, in the public lots and garages near **Merchants Square** at the western end of Duke of Gloucester Street. But be careful: Spaces labeled "P2" are restricted to 2 hours; those marked "P1" and "P6" are long-term.

Tickets

It costs nothing to stroll the streets of the Historic Area and perhaps debate revolutionary politics with the interpreters pretending to be Thomas Jefferson or Patrick Henry, but you will need a **ticket** to enter the key buildings and the museums, see the 35-minute orientation film at the visitor center, use the Historic Area shuttle buses, and take a 30-minute Orientation Walk through the restored village.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation changes its system of tickets and passes so frequently that I'm almost wasting ink telling you what they were at press time. You should *definitely* call the visitor center or check the Colonial Williamsburg website (www.history.org) for the latest information. With that caveat, this was the pass structure as it existed when we went to press.

A 1-day **Capital City Pass** ticket allowed access to most Historic Area attractions, but not the Governor's Palace or the walking tours. It cost $36 for adults, $18 for children 6 to 14, free for children 5 and younger. You could add the Governor's Palace for $10 adults, $5 children. It is good for the day you buy it, regardless of the time you purchased it.

Much more useful is the **Governor's Key-to-the-City Pass,** which includes everything you're likely to see and is good for 2 days. At press time it was going for $46 adults, $23 children 6 to 17.

For longer stays, it's worth paying $55 per adult, $28 for children 6 to 17 for a **Liberty Pass,** which is good for 1 year and includes a 25% discount on the nighttime performances.

Value Saving Money on Tickets & Hotel Rooms

You can buy tickets to Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens Williamsburg, Water Country USA, Colonial Historical National Park, and other Historic Triangle attractions separately and pay full price, or you can do some shopping and come up with money-saving combination deals. Some hotels and motels offer discounted ticket prices to local attractions if you stay with them; it's worth asking when you call to make your reservation. **Colonial Williamsburg** (✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/220-7645; www.history.org) almost always offers packages including tickets and discounted rates at its hotels. The **Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association** (✆ **800/211-7164;** www.gowilliamsburg.com) also has hotel-ticket deals.

Tickets are available at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center, a **ticket booth** at the Merchants Square shops on Henry Street at Duke of Gloucester Street, and **Lumber House** on Duke of Gloucester Street opposite the Palace Green.

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, and Visa credit cards are accepted at Colonial Williamsburg ticket outlets, attractions, hotels, and taverns.

The Colonial Buildings

Bassett Hall

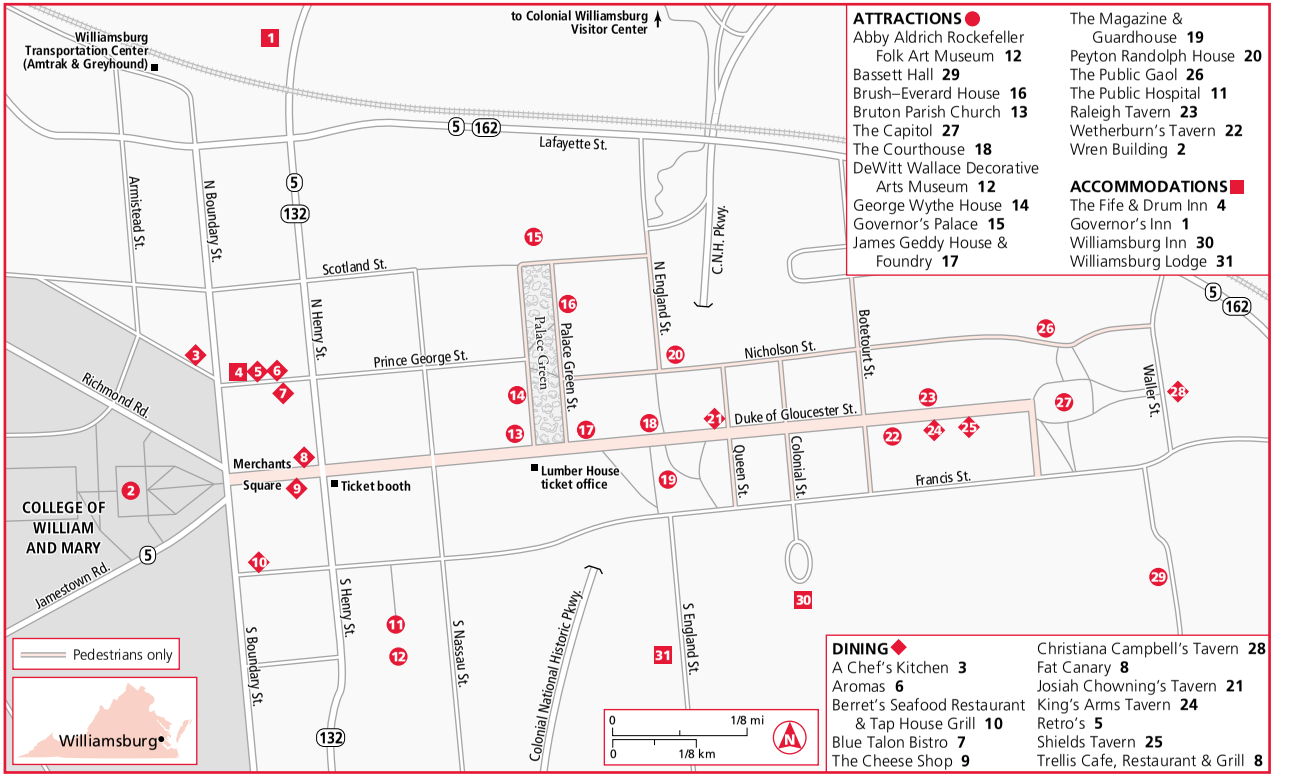
Built between 1753 and 1766, Bassett Hall was the mid-1930s residence of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and it is restored and furnished to reflect their era. The name derives from the ownership of Martha Washington's nephew Burwell Bassett, who lived here from 1800 to 1839. In spite of changes the Rockefellers made, much of the interior is original, including woodwork, paneling, mantels, and yellow-pine flooring. Much of the furniture is 18th- and 19th-century American in the Chippendale, Federal, and Empire styles. There are beautifully executed needlework rugs made by Mrs. Rockefeller, and early-19th-century prayer rugs adorn the morning room. Hundreds of examples of ceramics and china are on display, as are collections of 18th- and 19th-century American and English glass, Canton enamelware, and folk art.

Brush-Everard House ★

One of the oldest buildings in Williamsburg, the Brush-Everard House was built in 1717 as a residence-cum-shop by public armorer and master gunsmith John Brush. The most distinguished owner was Thomas Everard, two-time mayor of Williamsburg. Though not as wealthy as George Wythe and John Randolph, he was in their elite circle. He enlarged the house, adding the two wings that create a U shape. Today, the home is restored and furnished to its Everard-era appearance. The smokehouse and kitchen out back are original.

The Capitol ★★★

Virginia legislators met in the H-shaped Capitol from 1704 to 1780. America's first representative assembly, it had an upper house, His Majesty's Council of State, of 12 members appointed for life by the king. Freeholders of each county elected members of the lower House of Burgesses (there were 128 burgesses by 1776). The Burgesses became a training ground for patriots such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, and Patrick Henry. As 1776 approached, the Burgesses passed resolutions



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Fun Facts Hang 'Em High

In Colonial times, all civil and criminal cases (the latter punishable by mutilation or death) were tried in the General Court. Because juries were sent to deliberate in a third-floor room without heat, light, or food, there were few hung juries. Thirteen of Blackbeard the Pirate's crew were tried here and sentenced to hang.

against Parliament's Stamp Act and levy on tea—in Henry's immortal words, "taxation without representation," which became a motto of the Revolution.

The Capitol burned down in 1747, was rebuilt in 1753, and succumbed to fire again in 1832. This reconstruction is of the 1704 version, complete with Queen Anne's coat of arms adorning the tower and the Great Union flag flying overhead. The Secretary's Office next door is original. You must take a 30-minute **tour** to get inside the Capitol.

The Courthouse ★★★

An intriguing window on Colonial life's criminal justice division is offered in the courthouse, which dominates Market Square. An original building, the courthouse was the scene of proceedings ranging from criminal trials to the issuance of licenses. Wife beating, pig stealing, and debtor and creditor disputes were among the cases tried here. You can participate in the administration of Colonial justice at the courthouse by sitting on a jury or acting as a defendant. In Colonial times, convicted offenders were usually punished immediately after the verdict. Punishments included public flogging at the whipping post (conveniently located just outside the courthouse) or being locked in the stocks or pillory, where the offenders were subjected to public ridicule. Jail sentences were very unusual—punishment was swift and drastic, and the offenders then returned to the community, often bearing lifelong evidence of their conviction.

George Wythe House ★

On the west side of the Palace Green is the elegant restored brick home of George Wythe (pronounced "with"), classics scholar, noted lawyer and teacher (Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, and John Marshall were his students), and member of the House of Burgesses. A close friend of royal governors, Wythe nevertheless was the first Virginia signer of the Declaration of Independence. Wythe did not sign the Constitution, however, because it did not contain a Bill of Rights or antislavery provisions. His house was Washington's headquarters prior to the siege of Yorktown and Rochambeau's after the surrender of Cornwallis. Open-hearth cooking is demonstrated in the outbuilding.

Governor's Palace ★★★

This meticulous reconstruction is of the Georgian mansion that was the residence and official headquarters of royal governors from 1714 until Lord Dunmore fled before dawn in the face of armed resistance in 1775, thus ending British rule in Virginia. The palace now portrays the final 5 years of British rule. Though the sumptuous surroundings, nobly proportioned halls and rooms, 10 acres of formal gardens and greens, and vast wine cellars all evoke splendor, the king's representative was, by that time, little more than a functionary of great prestige but limited power. He was more apt to behave like a diplomat in a foreign land than an autocratic Colonial ruler.

Tours, given continuously through the day, end in the gardens, where you can explore the elaborate geometric parterres, topiary work, bowling green, pleached *allées,* and a

holly maze patterned after the one at Hampton Court. Plan at least 30 minutes to wander the stunning grounds and visit the kitchen and stable yards.

James Geddy House & Foundry ★

This two-story L-shaped 1762 home (with attached shops) is an original building where you can see how a comfortably situated middle-class family lived in the 18th century. Unlike the fancier abodes, the Geddy House has no wallpaper or oil paintings; a mirror and spinet from England, however, indicate relative affluence.

James Geddy, Sr., was a gunsmith and brass founder who advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* of July 8, 1737, that he had "a great Choice of Guns and Fowling Pieces, of several Sorts and Sizes, true bored, which he will warrant to be good; and will sell them as cheap as they are usually sold in England." A younger son, James, Jr., became the town's foremost silversmith and was a member of the city's Common Council involved in furthering the patriot cause. Craftsmen cast silver, pewter, bronze, and brass items at a foundry here.

The Magazine & Guardhouse ★★

Another original building, this octagonal brick structure was constructed in 1715 to house ammunition and arms for the defense of the colony. In Colonial Williamsburg, every able-bodied freeman belonged to the militia from the ages of 16 to 60 and did his part in protecting hearth and home from attack by local tribes, riots, slave uprisings, and pirate raids. The high wall and guardhouse were built during the French and Indian War to protect the magazine's 60,000 pounds of gunpowder. Today the building is stocked with 18th-century equipment—flintlock muskets, cannons, barrels of powder, bayonets, and drums, the latter for communication purposes. Children can join the militia here during the summer (see "Especially for Kids," below).

Fun Facts

The College of William & Mary

Standing at the western end of Duke of Gloucester Street, the stately **Sir Christopher Wren Building** may not be part of Colonial Williamsburg, but it is the oldest restored structure here. It's also America's oldest college building. Constructed between 1695 and 1699, even before there was a Williamsburg, it's the campus centerpiece of **The College of William and Mary,** the country's second-oldest college behind only Harvard University. King William III and Queen Mary II chartered the school in 1693, and over the next century it was the alma mater of many of the country's early leaders, including Thomas Jefferson. (Its most famous modern alumni are actresses Glenn Close and Linda Lavin and comedian Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show.*) Fire gutted the Wren building in 1705, 1859, and 1862. Its exterior walls remained intact, and in 1928 John D. Rockefeller, Jr., restored it to its Colonial appearance. The college still uses its upstairs classrooms and offices, but the first-floor Grammar School, Great Hall, and Wren Chapel (site of many a campus marriage) are open to the public Monday through Friday from 10am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 5pm, and Sunday from noon to 5pm. Admission is free. The college's **visitor information office** in the rear of the building (✆ **757/221-4000;** www.wm.edu/visitors/index.php) has campus maps.

Tips Carriage Rides

A fun way to see the Historic Area is on horse-drawn carriage rides, which depart from a horse post in front of the magazine and guardhouse (see above). Check with the visitor center or the Greenhow Lumber House on Duke of Gloucester Street for schedules and prices.

Peyton Randolph House ★

The Randolphs were one of the most prominent and wealthy families in Colonial Virginia. Sir John Randolph was a respected lawyer, Speaker of the House of Burgesses, and Virginia's representative to London, where he was the only Colonial-born Virginian ever to be knighted. When he died he left his library to 16-year-old Peyton, "hoping he will betake himself to the study of law." When Peyton Randolph died in 1775, his cousin, Thomas Jefferson, purchased his books at auction; they eventually became the nucleus of the Library of Congress. Peyton Randolph followed in his father's footsteps, studying law in London after attending the College of William and Mary. Known as the great mediator, he was unanimously elected president of 1774's First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, and though he believed in nonviolence and hoped the colonies could amicably settle their differences with England, he was a firm patriot.

The house (actually, two connected homes) dates to 1715. It is today restored to reflect the period around 1770. The house is open to the public for self-guided tours with period-costumed interpreters in selected rooms.

The Public Gaol ★

As noted above, imprisonment was not the usual punishment for crime in Colonial times, but persons awaiting trial and runaway slaves sometimes spent months in the Public Gaol. In winter, the cells were bitterly cold; in summer, they were stifling. Beds were piles of straw; leg irons, shackles, and chains were used frequently; and the daily diet consisted of "salt beef damaged, and Indian meal." In its early days, the gaol doubled as a madhouse, and during the Revolution redcoats, spies, traitors, and deserters swelled its population.

The gaol opened in 1704. Debtors' cells were added in 1711 (though the imprisoning of debtors was virtually eliminated after a 1772 law made creditors responsible for their upkeep), and keeper's quarters were built in 1722. The thick-walled redbrick building served as the Williamsburg city jail through 1910. The building today is restored to its 1720s appearance.

The Public Hospital ★

Opened in 1773, the "Public Hospital for Persons of Insane and Disordered Minds" was America's first mental asylum. From 1773 to about 1820, "treatment" involved solitary confinement and a grisly course of action designed to "encourage" patients to "choose" rational behavior (it was assumed back then that patients willfully chose a life of insanity). So-called therapeutic techniques included the use of drugs, submersion in cold water for extended periods, bleeding, blistering salves, and an array of restraining devices. On a self-guided tour, you'll see a 1773 cell, with a straw-filled mattress on the floor, ragged blanket, and manacles. The hospital also is the entry for Colonial Williamsburg's museums (see below).

Raleigh Tavern ★★

This most famous of Williamsburg taverns was named for Sir Walter Raleigh, who launched the "Lost Colony" that disappeared on Roanoke Island in North Carolina some 20 years before Jamestown was settled. After the Governor's Palace, it was the social and political hub of the town, especially during Publick Times. Regulars included George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who met here in 1774 with Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and Francis Lightfoot Lee to discuss revolution. Patrick Henry's troops gave their commander a farewell dinner here in 1776.

The original tavern was destroyed by fire in 1859. Reconstructed on the original site in 1932, its facilities include two dining rooms; the Apollo ballroom, scene of elegant soirees; a clubroom that could be rented for private meetings; and a bar where ale and hot rum punch were the favored drinks.

In the Raleigh Tavern Bakery, you can buy 18th-century confections like gingerbread and Shrewsbury cake as well as more modern soups and sandwiches from 9am to 5pm daily.

Wetherburn's Tavern

Though less important than the Raleigh, Wetherburn's also played an important role in Colonial Williamsburg. George Washington occasionally favored the tavern with his patronage. And, like the Raleigh, it was mobbed during Publick Times and frequently served as a center of sedition and a rendezvous of Revolutionary patriots. The heart-of-yellow-pine floors are original, so you can actually walk in Washington's footsteps. Windows, trim, and weatherboarding are a mixture of old and new; and the outbuildings, except for the dairy, are reconstructions. **Tours** lasting 25 minutes are given throughout the day.

The Colonial Williamsburg Museums ★★

From the central hallway of the Public Hospital (see above), an elevator descends underground to Colonial Williamsburg's two fine museums.

The 62,000-square-foot **DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum** houses some 10,000 objects representing the highest achievement of American and English artisans from the 1640s to 1800. You'll see period furnishings, ceramics, textiles, paintings, prints, silver, pewter, clocks, scientific instruments, mechanical devices, and weapons. Don't miss Charles Willson Peale's 1780 portrait of George Washington, which he patterned after the coronation portrait of George III of England, in the Masterworks Gallery.

Go through the Weldon Gallery on the upper level to the **Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum** with more than 2,600 folk-art paintings, sculptures, and art objects. Mrs. Rockefeller was a pioneer in this branch of collecting in the 1920s and 1930s. Her

Fun Facts **Stocks & Bondage**

The punishments meted out in 18th-century Williamsburg included public ridicule. The convicted had their neck, arms, and legs bound in stocks and pillories. Passersby added to the ridicule by tossing rotten tomatoes at the convicts. Modern visitors are more likely to have a laugh; in fact, millions of us have had our photos taken with our heads and hands dangling from the stocks.

collection includes household ornaments and useful wares (hand-stenciled bed covers, butter molds, pottery, utensils, painted furniture, boxes), mourning pictures (embroideries honoring departed relatives and national heroes), family and individual portraits, shop signs, carvings, whittled toys, calligraphic drawings, weavings, quilts, and paintings of scenes from daily life.

A cafe here offers light fare, beverages, and a limited luncheon menu.

Shops, Crafts & Trade Exhibits

Numerous 18th-century crafts demonstrations occur throughout the Historic Area. Such goings-on were a facet of everyday life in the preindustrial era. Dozens of crafts are practiced by more than 70 master craftspeople at 21 sites. They're an extremely skilled group, many having served up to 7-year apprenticeships. The program is part of Williamsburg's efforts to present an accurate picture of Colonial society, portraying the average man and woman as well as more illustrious citizens.

You can see a cabinetmaker, a wig maker, a silversmith, a printer and bookbinder, a blacksmith, a shoemaker, a gunsmith, a milliner, a wheelwright, and carpenters—all carrying on, and explaining, their trades in the 18th-century fashion.

ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS

In addition to Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Water Country USA (see below), families can enjoy many hands-on activities in the Historic Area. A fun activity is at the **Governor's Palace,** where the dancing master gives lessons. During the summer kids can "enlist" in the militia and practice marching and drilling at the **Magazine and Guardhouse** (I still have a snapshot of myself holding a flintlock when I was a boy). If they get unruly, you can lock them in the stocks in front of the **Courthouse.** Inquire at the visitor center for special themed tours in areas of your children's specific interests.

The Theme Parks

Busch Gardens Williamsburg Kids At some point you may need a break from early American history, especially if you have kids in tow, so head over to Busch Gardens Williamsburg, a 360-acre family entertainment park. Little mental effort is required to enjoy shows, festivities, and more than 50 rides, including the world-class roller coasters Apollo's Chariot and Alpengeist. Young children will especially enjoy the Sesame Street Forest of Fun, which has rides their own size.

Arrive early—but try not to come when it's raining, as some rides may not operate. Bring comfortable shoes; and, remember, you will get wet on some of the rides, so wear appropriate clothing. As soon as you're through the turnstiles, pick up a copy of a park map and the day's activity schedule, which tells what's showing and when at the entertainment venues. Then take a few minutes to carefully plan your time—it's a big park with lots to see and do. Busch Gardens changes every year, so be on the lookout for new attractions.

1 Busch Gardens Blvd. (3 miles east of Williamsburg on U.S. 60). ✆ **800/343-9746.** www.buschgardens.com. Admission and hours vary, so call ahead, check website, or get brochure at visitor centers. Admission about $62 adults, $52 children 3–6, free for children 2 and younger for unlimited rides, shows, and attractions. Discounts for Virginia residents. Mid-May to Labor Day daily; late Mar to mid-May and day after Labor Day to Oct Fri–Sun. Closed Nov to late Mar.

Presidents Park Overrated This outdoor facility across Va. 199 from Water Country USA boasts 20-foot-high busts of the first 43 U.S. presidents—at press time, a bust of the 44th president, Barack Obama, had not been unveiled. One wag has described this

place as "Mt. Rushmore East." Standing as they do in the middle of a garden, they also remind me a bit of those mysterious stone statues on Easter Island. They're the result of 5 year's work by sculptor David Adicks. Self-guided tours explain each president's accomplishments, complete with music from his day. It's a quick refresher course in American history, but I don't think it's interesting enough to keep children's attention, especially after they've visited the Historic Area.

211 Water Country Pkwy. (off Va. 199). ✆ **800/588-4327** or 757/259-1121. www.presidentspark.org. Admission $13 adults, $8 children 6–12, free for children 5 and under. Jan–Feb daily 10am–4pm; Mar–late May daily 10am–5pm; late May–early Sept daily 9am–7pm; early Sept–Dec daily 10am–5pm.

Water Country USA Kids Virginia's largest water-oriented amusement park features exciting water slides, rides, and entertainment set to a 1950s and 1960s surf theme. The largest ride—Big Daddy Falls—takes the entire family on a colossal river-rafting adventure. Or you can twist and turn on giant inner tubes through flumes, tunnels, water "explosions," and down a waterfall to "splashdown." And there's much more, all of it wet and sometimes wild. It's a perfect place to chill out after a hot summer's day in the Historic Area.

176 Water Country USA Pkwy. (off Va. 199, north of Exit 242 off I-64). ✆ **800/343-7946.** www.watercountryusa.com. Admission and hours vary, so call ahead, check website, or get brochure at visitor centers. Admission about $40 adults, $35 children 3–6, free for children 2 and younger. Parking $12. Late May to Labor Day daily. Closed day after Labor Day to late-May. Take Va. 199 north of I-64 and follow signs.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

BICYCLING Not only is a bike the easiest way to get around the Historic Area, the 23-mile-long **Colonial Parkway** between Jamestown and Yorktown is one of Virginia's most scenic bike routes. There is no dedicated bike path, but vehicular traffic usually is light enough that you'll have the road virtually to yourself. You'll pedal along the banks of the James and York rivers (where there are picnic areas) and through a tunnel under Colonial Williamsburg. The 7 miles between Williamsburg and Jamestown are flat, but you'll have more car traffic to contend with than on the rolling 13-mile journey to Yorktown. Rentals are available at the Woodlands Hotel & Suites (p. 263).

GOLF The Williamsburg area is *the* place to play golf in Virginia—if you can afford it; a round here can cost $100 and up during the prime summer months. It all started in 1947 with Colonial Williamsburg's noted 18-hole **Golden Horseshoe** course (✆ **757/220-7696**) and a 9-holer for guests of the Williamsburg Inn. On the James River, **Kingsmill Resort** (✆ **800/832-5665** or 757/253-3998) has three top-flight 18-hole courses of its own, including the world-famous River Course, which hosted the LPGA Michelob Ultra Open from 2003 to 2009. See "Where to Stay," below, for more about the Williamsburg Inn and Kingsmill Resort.

Ford's Colony (✆ **800/334-6033** or 757/258-4130; www.fordscolony.com) has two Dan Maples–designed courses, the challenging Blue-Gold (12 of 18 holes bordered by water) and the more forgiving White-Red. Another Maples-designed course is in the works. **Williamsburg National Golf Club** (✆ **800/826-5732** or 757/258-9642; www.wngc.com) has Virginia's only Jack Nicklaus–designed course, which *Golf Digest* magazine considers one of the state's top 10 links.

Royal New Kent Golf Club (✆ **888/253-4363** or 804/966-7023) has "a succession of you've-never-seen-this-before holes," according to *Golf Digest.* Its sister course at **Stonehouse Golf Club** (✆ **888/253-4363** or 757/566-1138) is more like a mountain course, with great vistas to please your eyes and deep bunkers to test your skills. Also

pleasing to the eye, **Kiskiack Golf Club** (✆ **800/989-4728** or 757/566-2200) has two lakes nestled among its rolling hills.

Call the courses for current greens fees, directions, and tee times.

HORSEBACK RIDING One- and 3-hour rail rides are available at **Stonehouse Stables** (✆ **757/566-9633;** www.stonehousestables.com) in Toano, off U.S. 60 west of Williamsburg. Call for prices and reservations, which are required.

SHOPPING

In the Historic Area

Duke of Gloucester Street is the center for 18th-century wares created by craftspeople plying the trades of our forefathers. The goods include hand-wrought silver jewelry from the Sign of the Golden Ball, hats from the Mary Dickinson shop, hand-woven linens from Prentis Store, books bound in leather and hand-printed newspapers from the post office, gingerbread cakes from the Raleigh Tavern Bake Shop, and everything from foods to fishhooks at Greenhow and Tarpley's, a general store. In fine weather, check out the outdoor market next to the Magazine.

Run by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the **Craft House,** on Duke of Gloucester Street at Henry Street in Merchants Square (✆ **757/220-7747**), features Williamsburg's own brand dinnerware, flatware, glassware, pewter, silver, folk art, jewelry, and ceramics. Its sister store, **Williamsburg At Home** (✆ **757/220-7749**), carries high-end furniture and housewares.

Other "shoppes" in **Merchants Square** offer a wide range of merchandise: antiques, antiquarian books and prints, 18th-century-style floral arrangements, candy, toys, handcrafted pewter and silver items, needlework supplies, country quilts, Oriental rugs, and everything Virginian, including hams and peanuts. It's not all of the "ye olde" variety, however, for national chains such as Chico's, Williams-Sonoma, and Barnes & Noble (disguised as the William and Mary Bookstore) are here, too. Merchants Square has free 2-hour parking for its customers.

On Richmond Road

Shopping in the Historic Area is fun, but the biggest draws are along Richmond Road (U.S. 60) between Williamsburg and Lightfoot, an area 5 to 7 miles west of the Historic Area. If you like outlet shopping, Richmond Road is for you.

Most of the action is at **Prime Outlets Williamsburg** ★★, between Airport and Lightfoot roads (✆ **877/466-8853** or 757/565-0702; www.primeoutlets.com). The largest and best outlet mall here, it dwarfs its competition by a mile, which is about how far you will walk from one side to the other. I always drive through it first and spot my favorite shops before hunting down a parking space. You'll find an ever-growing array of shops including Bass, Bose, Brooks Brothers, Coach Leather, Crabtree & Evelyn, Eddie Bauer, Etienne Aigner, Harvé Bernard, J. Crew, Jones New York, Jos. A. Bank, L'eggs/Hanes/Bali, Maidenform, Mikasa, Naturalizer, Nike, Reebok/Rockport, Royal Doulton, Seiko, Van Heusen, and Waterford Wedgwood. They are open Monday through Saturday 10am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 7pm.

Before getting there you'll pass **Patriot Plaza Premium Outlets** (✆ **757/258-0767**), between Ironbound and Airport roads. It's a small, upmarket mall with Orvis, Plow & Hearth, and a few others. Shops here are open Monday through Saturday 10am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 6pm.

Among the major stores in residence at **The Williamsburg Outlet Mall** (✆ **888/746-7333** or 757/565-3378), at the intersection of U.S. 60 and Lightfoot Road (C.R. 646), are Bass, Bon Worth, Dockers, Dress Barn, Farberware, L'eggs, and Big Dogs. It's enclosed in an air-conditioned mall, a saving grace on sweltering summer days. It's open Monday through Saturday 10am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 6pm.

Across the highway you can browse for collectibles and perhaps find a priceless piece of antiquity at the **Williamsburg Antique Mall,** 500 Lightfoot Rd. (✆ **757/565-3422;** www.antiqueswilliamsburg.com), with 45,000 square feet of dealer space. It's open Monday through Saturday 10am to 6pm, Sunday noon to 5pm.

Continue west 1½ miles on U.S. 60, and you'll come to the **Williamsburg Doll Factory** (✆ **757/564-9703;** www.dollfactory.com), with limited-edition porcelain collector's dolls. You can observe the doll-making process and buy parts to make your own. Other items available are stuffed animals, dollhouses and miniatures, clowns, and books on dolls. It's open Monday through Saturday 9am to 5pm, Sunday 10am to 4pm.

On the Wine Trail

In 1623, the Jamestown settlers were required to plant "20 vines for every male in the family above the age of 20." By doing so, it was thought, the fledgling colony would develop a profitable wine industry. As it turned out, the profitable industry was tobacco, not grapes, and winemaking never took off.

Until the 1980s, that is, when the **Williamsburg Winery,** 5800 Wessex Hundred (✆ **757/229-0999;** www.williamsburgwinery.com), Virginia's first modern vineyard, proved that good grapes could be grown on the Peninsula. *Wine Spectator* magazine's critics have twice cited its vintages for excellence. Its Governor's White is the most widely purchased of Virginia's wine, although you may find the John Adlum blended chardonnay much better. Tastings and 45-minute tours cost $8 per person.

Time your visit to have a bite of lunch along with your Two Shilling Red in the winery's **Gabriel Archer Tavern.** Freshly baked French bread accompanies interesting salads, sandwiches. It's reasonably priced, too, with lunch items running $8 to $13, dinner main courses $10 to $20.

The winery is open Monday through Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 11am to 5pm (Apr–Oct daily to 6pm). The tavern serves lunch Monday to Friday, dinner Thursday through Monday. From the Historic Area, take Henry Street (Va. 132) south, turn right on Va. 199, left on Brookwood Drive, and another left on Lake Powell Road to the winery.

WHERE TO STAY

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Hotels

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation operates four hotels in all price categories: Williamsburg Inn (very expensive), Williamsburg Lodge (expensive), Woodlands Hotel & Suites (moderate), and the Governor's Inn (inexpensive), plus a collection of tavern rooms and houses known as the Colonial Houses. Guests at all except the Governor's Inn can use most of the sports facilities at the Williamsburg Inn and Williamsburg Lodge.

For advance reservations, call the **visitor center reservations service** (✆ **800/447-8679;** www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com). You also can make walk-in reservations at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center.

Value Just for Guests

There are advantages to staying at one of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's hotels. For example, you can purchase discounted Colonial Williamsburg admission tickets valid for the length of your stay (recently $30 adults, $15 children 6–17). You also get breaks on other fees and can use your room keys to charge Historic Area expenses to your hotel bill.

Like most hotels these days, room rates at the foundation's accommodations vary widely depending on the season and how many guests may be booked on a given night. Try to reserve as far in advance as possible for the busy summer season and for spring and fall weekends. You might get a bargain during other times, especially if business is slow. You also can make walk-in reservations at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center—at discounted rates if the hotels have rooms to spare (don't expect to get a deal on weekends and holidays). Also be sure to ask about holiday, golf, family, and other package deals.

Governor's Inn ★ Value Least expensive of the foundation's hotels, the extraordinarily well-maintained Governor's Inn is a two- and three-story, 1960s-vintage brick motel, most of whose rooms open to outdoor walkways. This not your ordinary inexpensive motel, for the rooms come stocked with thick towels and Gilchrist & Soames toiletries. Williamsburg posters on the walls remind you where you are. My only complaint was that my heating and air-conditioning unit was a bit noisy. There's an outdoor pool for cooling off. It's on the northwestern edge of the Historic Area near the Transportation Center, which means that trains come by during the night. On the other hand, you can walk from here to everything in the Historic District.

506 N. Henry St. (Va. 132), at Lafayette St., Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-1000. Fax 757/220-7480. www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com. 200 units. $49–$109 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Access to health club at Williamsburg Woodlands; pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Williamsburg Inn ★★★ One of the nation's most distinguished hotels, this rambling white-brick Regency-style inn has played host to U.S. presidents and heads of state including Queen Elizabeth II (both in 1957 for Jamestown's 350th anniversary and in 2007 for the 400th). This is also a great golf resort, with three top-flight courses to play, including the noted Golden Horseshoe (see "Outdoor Activities," above). With giant floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the renowned Golden Horseshoe golf course, the **Regency Dining Room** features classic American cuisine (coats and ties are still required after 6pm). The champagne Sunday brunch is worth a go (reservations are required). All of the spacious accommodations are exquisitely furnished with reproductions, books, and photos. Rooms in a modern building called **Providence Hall,** adjacent to the inn, are furnished in a contemporary blend of 18th-century and Oriental styles, with balconies or patios overlooking tennis courts and a beautiful wooded area. The inn's fitness center is in Colonial Williamsburg's full-service spa, between here and the Williamsburg Lodge (below).

136 Francis St., Williamsburg, VA 23187. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-1000. Fax 757/220-7096. www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com. 62 units. Main inn $320–$580 double, $440–$800 suite; Providence Hall $300–$360 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; 3 golf courses; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service; sauna; spa; tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Williamsburg Lodge ★★ Across the street from the Williamsburg Inn, the foundation's second-best hotel has been restored to its original 1930s appearance, albeit with modern conveniences. The original structures were gutted, and Colonial Williamsburg's state-of-the-art conference center was added. Only the existing Tazewell Wing, a 1970s-vintage structure whose rooms have balconies facing landscaped courtyards, escaped serious surgery. The other more luxurious rooms are in five Colonial-style "Guest Houses" linked to the main building by covered brick walkways. The new units are notable for their Colonial Williamsburg–designed furniture and their retro 1930s bathrooms. Guests here share all of the Williamsburg Inn's facilities, including the luxurious spa across the street. Large suites occupy the second floor of the main building, which houses a restaurant and comfy bar.

310 S. England St., Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-1000. Fax 757/220-7685. www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com. 323 units. $129–$239 double; $249–$359 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; children's programs; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service; spa; tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Woodlands Hotel & Suites ★ Kids Located beside the visitor center, this is the foundation's third-best hotel. A separate building with a peaked roof and skylights holds the lodgelike lobby, where guests are treated to continental breakfast in a room with a fireplace. Interior corridors lead to the guest quarters in a U-shaped building around a courtyard. The more expensive suites have separate living and sleeping rooms divided by the bathroom and a wet bar with coffeemaker, fridge, and microwave oven (you won't have a fridge or microwave in the moderately spacious rooms). All units have Colonial-style pine furniture and photos of the Historic Area on their walls. The Huzzah! family restaurant (think Applebee's) is on the premises. There's plenty to keep kids occupied around the complex. Couple that with the pullout sofa beds in the suites, and it's a good choice for families of moderate means.

105 Visitors Center Dr. (P.O. Box 1776), Williamsburg, VA 23187. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-1000. Fax 757/229-7079. www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com. 300 units. $79–$159 double; $119–$209 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; children's programs; concierge; health club; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (suites only), hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Colonial Houses ★★

My favorite way to experience Colonial Williamsburg up close and personal is to stay in one of the foundation's **Colonial Houses.** In fact, they are the only way to actually stay in the Historic Area mere steps from the main attractions. Scattered throughout the Historic Area, the Colonial Houses are former laundries, workshops, small homes, and stand-alone kitchens that have been converted into one- and two-bedroom bungalows. Others are rooms in taverns, some of which have as many as 16 units. Some rooms are tiny; tell the reservation clerk precisely what size room and what bed configuration you want. For example, I have stayed in the Robert Carter Kitchen, a two-story converted cookhouse just off the Palace Green. It has a downstairs living room and Pullman kitchen, and a winding staircase leads to a bedroom and bathroom. The sloping upstairs ceiling under a dormer roof was head-knockingly low on the sides.

Tastefully furnished with 18th-century antiques and reproductions, all the houses are variously equipped with kitchens, living rooms, and fireplaces—and in some cases, sizable gardens. They all have air-conditioning, TVs, phones with dial-up dataports, and coffeemakers. The Williamsburg Inn, which manages the houses, provides room service, and guests here can use the facilities there. Each house has its own parking space. Tavern

rooms range from $160 to $275, while houses go for $200 to $475 per night. Reserve through the visitor center's reservations service (✆ **800/447-8679;** www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com).

Other Hotels & Motels

I have room in these pages to mention but a few of this area's more than 80 chain hotels and motels. You can book rooms, buy tickets, and search for money-saving package deals on **www.visitwilliamsburg.com**, operated jointly by the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance and the Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association (see "Visitor Information" under "Essentials," earlier). Or you can call the association's reservations service at ✆ **800/899-9462.**

The majority of hotels and motels are west of the Historic Area on Richmond and Bypass roads. None of them is within walking distance of the Historic Area, but you can take the local buses (see "Getting Around Williamsburg," earlier in this chapter).

Closest to Busch Gardens are the **Marriott Williamsburg,** 50 Kingsmill Rd. (✆ **800/442-3654** or 757/220-1500), the **Courtyard by Marriott,** 470 McLaws Circle (✆ **800/321-2211** or 757/221-0700), and the **Quality Inn at Kingsmill** (✆ **877/424-6423** or 757/220-1100). All are in an office park off U.S. 60 East at the entry to the Kingsmill complex.

Sitting on U.S. 60 between the Historic Area and Busch Gardens, the **Crowne Plaza Williamsburg at Fort Magruder,** 6545 Pocahontas Trail (✆ **800/333-3333** or 757/220-2250), draws lots of conventions and meetings but is also a good choice for families with children.

Great Wolf Lodge ★ (Kids) About 7 miles west of the Historic Area, this large theme hotel built of logs to resemble a rustic Rocky Mountain lodge is geared to families with children. A whimsical theme prevails (the two cafeteria-style restaurants are named Loose Moose Cafe and Camp Critter Bar & Grille), but despite the rusticity, the star of the show is a monstrous indoor water park featuring a plethora of pools and water slides. Adults can spend their leisure hours being pampered in the full-service spa. While a few guest rooms have hot tubs and fireplaces geared to grownups, most carry on the family theme, with log cabin–like areas set aside for bunk beds. A few larger units have kitchens. Only the hotel's guests can use the water park, whose admission is included in the room rates.

549 E. Rochambeau Dr., Williamsburg, VA 23188. ✆ **800/551-9653** or 757/229-9700. Fax 757/227-9780. www.greatwolflodge.com. 405 units. $139–$419 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; children's programs; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service; spa; watersports equipment. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, kitchen (some units), Wi-Fi.

Quarterpath Inn Built in the 1960s and owned and operated by the same family since 1982, this well-maintained motel is on the eastern side of town, so you can walk to the Historic Area, and Busch Gardens is 2 miles away. The rooms are in two-story buildings facing a parking lot, across which is an outdoor swimming pool. The relatively spacious rooms have king-size beds or two doubles plus tub/shower combination bathrooms. Four of the king-size-bed rooms have whirlpool tubs. Coffee is available in the lobby.

620 York St. (U.S. 60 E.), Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **800/446-9222** or 757/220-0960. Fax 757/220-1531. www.quarterpathinn.com. 130 units. $45–$99 double. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

Wedmore Place ★ I had been in France and Germany a few months before I visited the Williamsburg Winery's new hotel, and I must say the owners accomplished what they set out to do: Make it seem as if you are staying in Europe. This is especially evidenced by the fountain in the cobblestone courtyard at the center of the old-brick hotel, which seems ancient despite having been built in 2007. The rooms and public areas are loaded with Eurocentric art and other items, including a full set of body armor standing by the lobby fireplace. Named and decorated in the style of various European provinces, the luxurious guest quarters have wood-burning fireplaces. I especially liked the more charming top-floor units with dormer windows. Opening to the outdoor pool, Café Provencal serves breakfast to guests and Mediterranean fare to anyone at dinner. You can walk to Gabriel Archer Tavern at the winery (see "On the Wine Trail," above) for lunch or dinner.

5819 Wessex Hundred, Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **866/933-6673** or 757/941-0310. Fax 757/941-0318. www.wedmoreplace.com. 28 units. $165–$395 double; $400–$750 suite. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Williamsburg Hospitality House On Richmond Road about a half-mile west of the Historic Area and opposite the College of William and Mary's football stadium, this four-story brick hotel is as convenient to the major sights as any large nonfoundation, nonchain hotel. It's built around a central courtyard with flowering trees, plants, and umbrella tables. Spacious guest rooms and public areas are appointed with a gracious blend of 18th-century reproductions. You can open the windows in some units, thus letting in fresh air. Meetings rather than families make up the bulk of the business here, but couples will fit right in.

415 Richmond Rd., Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **800/932-9192** or 757/229-4020. Fax 757/220-1560. www.williamsburghosphouse.com. 296 units. $89–$139 double; $250–$475 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; health club; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hrs.).

Bed & Breakfasts

Williamsburg has more than 20 B&Bs, including **Williamsburg Sampler,** 922 Jamestown Rd., Williamsburg, VA 23185 (✆ **800/722-1169** or 757/253-0399; www.williamsburgsampler.com), a 1976-vintage replica of an 18th-century plantation manse. For more choices, go to **www.bandbwilliamsburg.com**, official site of the Williamsburg Bed & Breakfast Network (no phone). You can book online.

The Fife & Drum Inn ★★ Finds Occupying upstairs quarters in one of the Merchants Square buildings, this charmer is the only privately owned inn in the Historic Area. "Colonial Williamsburg is your front yard," say owners Billy and Sharon Scruggs, who grew up here and put out a full breakfast every morning, including Virginia country ham biscuits. A sky-lit hallway with faux-brick floor and clapboard siding (you will swear it's a street) leads to the seven medium-size rooms and two suites, some of which have dormer windows. The suites open to a narrow porch out back. Whimsical features such as birdhouses hide a few of the TVs. The Conservancy Room is the most romantic, with a canopied double bed and a claw-foot bathtub. The inn does not have an elevator, but you can opt for a street-level Colonial cottage around the corner and avoid the 17 steps in the main building. The cottage can sleep up to six.

441 Prince George St., Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **888/838-1783** or 757/345-1776. Fax 757/345-3433. www.fifeanddruminn.com. 9 units. $119–$205 double or suite; $285–$325 cottage. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

Liberty Rose ★★ Williamsburg's most romantic B&B, Brad and Sandra Hirz's 1920s two-story white-clapboard home sits on a wooded hilltop 1¼ miles from the Historic Area. An overall feeling of graciousness makes it a refuge from the rigors of sightseeing. Throughout you'll find Victorian, French- and English-country, and 18th-century antiques and reproductions, as well as fresh roses in every room. The elegant parlor, complete with grand piano that guests may play, has a working fireplace and comfortable chairs for relaxing. The accommodations are luxurious, each distinctively decorated. Bathrobes and a bowl of chocolates are de rigueur, as are telephones in each room. A full breakfast is served on the morning porch or in the courtyard. Children are not accepted here.

1022 Jamestown Rd., Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **800/545-1825** or 757/253-1260. www.libertyrose.com. 4 units. $185–$275 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. No children accepted. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

A Nearby Resort with Championship Golf

Kingsmill Resort & Spa ★★★ Nestled on beautifully landscaped grounds beside the James River, this luxurious, country club–like resort is the centerpiece of a 2,900-acre residential development. It's one of Virginia's most complete resorts, offering three golf courses, a sports complex with 15 tennis courts, and a full-service spa. The highlight is the world-famous River Course, which has hosted PGA and LPGA tournaments in its storied past. Accommodations consist of guest rooms and one-, two-, and three-bedroom suites in gray clapboard buildings overlooking the James River, golf-course fairways, or tennis courts. The suites have complete kitchens and living rooms with fireplaces. Daily housekeeping service, including fresh linens, is included. Kingsmill's main dining room offers fine cuisine with a terrific view of the James, while the golf club's restaurant overlooks the River Course. You can have an evening snack and sip an Anheuser-Busch cold one down at the marina. Guests can take a complimentary shuttle to Colonial Williamsburg and Busch Gardens Williamsburg.

1010 Kingsmill Rd., Williamsburg, VA 23185. ✆ **800/832-5665** or 757/253-1703. Fax 757/253-3993. www.kingsmill.com. 425 units. $189–$269 double; $349–$699 suite. Golf, tennis, and spa packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From I-64 take Exit 242 and follow Va. 199 west past U.S. 60 to sign for Kingsmill on the James. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 6 bars; babysitting; children's programs; concierge; 3 golf courses; health club; Jacuzzi; pool (indoor & outdoor); room service; sauna; spa; 15 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen (suites only), Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

Williamsburg abounds in restaurants catering to tourists. Most national chain, fast-food, and family restaurants have outlets on Richmond Road (U.S. 60) west of town.

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Taverns ★★

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation runs four reconstructed 18th-century "ordinaries" or taverns. They aim at authenticity in fare, ambience, costuming of the staff, and entertainment by wandering balladeers. Dinner at one of the taverns is a necessary ingredient of the Williamsburg experience. Their seasonal hours and menus change often, so what I write here may be inaccurate by the time you arrive. Current offerings are posted out front and at the ticket booth on Henry Street at Duke of Gloucester Street, and are available at the visitor center, so you can see what's being served before making your reservations.

You don't need a reservation to buy soups, sandwiches, and baked goods at the bakery in the **Raleigh Tavern** (p. 257), which is open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Tips The Early Bird Gets the Reservation

Advance reservations for dinner at Christiana Campbell's and King's Arms taverns are essential during the summer and on weekends during spring and fall. You can book tables up to 60 days in advance by dropping by or calling the visitor center (✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-2141). Lunch reservations are accepted only for major holidays.

Christiana Campbell's Tavern One block behind the Capitol, Christiana Campbell's Tavern is "where all the best people resorted" around 1765. George Washington recorded in his diary that he dined here 10 times over a 22-month period. After the capital moved to Richmond, business declined and operations ceased. In its heyday, the tavern was famous for seafood, and today that is once again the specialty. Campbell's is an authentic reproduction with 18th-century furnishings, blazing fireplaces, and flutists and balladeers to entertain diners. Dinner here is a sit-down affair with reservations highly recommended. The menu leans toward fish and fowl. There's a parking lot in the rear.

101 S. Waller St. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-2141. Reservations highly recommended. Main courses $20–$32. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 5–9pm.

Josiah Chowning's Tavern In 1766, Josiah Chowning announced the opening of a tavern "where all who please to favour me with their custom may depend upon the best of entertainment for themselves, servants, and horses, and good pasturage." It's charming, with low-beamed ceilings, raw pine floors, and country-made furnishings. There are two working fireplaces, and at night you dine by candlelight. These days it's once again operated like a boisterous 18th-century pub, with plenty of ale and light fare such as pit-cooked Virginia-style barbecue sandwiches, Brunswick stew, and country ham biscuits. One of the best things to do here after 5pm is to take in the 18th-century music, magic, and games.

109 E. Duke of Gloucester St. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-2141. Reservations not accepted. Most items $5.50–$12. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–10pm. Closed Jan.

King's Arms Tavern On the site of a 1772 establishment, King's Arms Tavern is a re-creation of the tavern and an adjoining home. Stables, a barbershop, laundry, smokehouse, kitchen, and other outbuildings have also been reconstructed. The original proprietress, Mrs. Jane Vobe, was famous for her fine cooking, and her establishment's proximity to the Capitol made it a natural meeting place during Publick Times. Today, the 11 dining rooms (8 with fireplaces) are painted and furnished following early Virginia precedent. The Queen Anne and Chippendale pieces are typical appointments of this class of tavern, and the prints, maps, engravings, aquatints, and mezzotints lining the walls are genuine examples of period interior decorations. Balladeers wander the rooms during dinner. There's outdoor dining in the garden during warm weather.

409 E. Duke of Gloucester St. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-2141. Reservations required at dinner. Lunch $9.50–$13; main courses $27–$34. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Lunch Thurs–Mon 11:30am–2:30pm; dinner seating daily 5–9pm.

Shields Tavern Value With 11 dining rooms and a garden under a trumpet-vine-covered arbor that seats 200, Shields is the largest of the Historic Area's tavern/

Value Eating Cheaply

In addition to Aromas Coffeehouse, Café & Bakeshop, other choices for inexpensive snacks and meals include the barbecue sandwiches at **Retro's,** two doors away at 435 Prince George St. (✆ **757/235-8816**), which are better than Pierce's (p. 270), and Retro's serves tasty hot dogs, too. Open daily 11am to 9pm.

Also in this block of Prince George Street is **Lenny's Gourmet** (✆ **757/253-0458**), purveyor of specialty salads, sandwiches, wraps, paninis, and sushi rolls. Open Monday to Saturday 9am to 9pm, Sunday 11am to 6pm.

restaurants. It's named for James Shields who, with his wife, Anne, and family, ran a much-frequented hostelry on this site in the mid-1700s. Based on a room-by-room inventory of Shields' personal effects, the tavern has been furnished with items similar to those used in the mid–18th century, and many rooms have working fireplaces. The modern bill of fare features barbecue and seafood gumbo.

422 E. Duke of Gloucester St. ✆ **800/447-8679** or 757/229-2141. Reservations highly recommended. Main courses $18–$24. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–7:45pm.

Restaurants in Merchants Square

Aromas Coffeehouse, Café & Bakeshop Value AMERICAN Attracting both the town and gown crowd, this well-worn, often noisy restaurant is both Williamsburg's favorite coffeehouse and one of its best choices for light, inexpensive meals. I often start my day here with a fresh pastry and cup of gourmet coffee or tea, although the morning fare also includes sausage biscuits, brie-stuffed French toast, and bagels with lox and cream cheese. Lunch switches to sandwiches, wraps, salads, and several vegetarian selections. A limited menu of main courses appearing after 5pm is headlined by Low Country barbecued shrimp over cheese grits. Order at the counter and wait for your number to be called, and be prepared to dine with plastic utensils. Beer and wine are served by the glass.

431 Prince George St. ✆ **757/221-6676.** www.aromasworld.com. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $4.50–$7; sandwiches and salads $5.50–$8; main courses $9–$11. MC, V. Mon–Thurs 7am–10pm; Sat 7am–11pm; Sun 8am–8pm.

Berret's Seafood Restaurant & Tap House Grill ★ AMERICAN A congenial, casual place, Berret's has a popular outdoor Tap House Grill, where you will find me quenching my thirst after schlepping around the Historic Area all day. It has heaters, so you can sit out here well into autumn. In the adjoining restaurant, canvas sailcloth shades, blue-trimmed china, and marine artifacts on the walls make an appropriate backdrop for the excellent seafood. Oysters or clams raw or steamed on the half shell do nicely as starters. For a main course, the crab cakes are pan-fried and served over a thin slice of Virginia ham—a pleasant combination of flavors. The Tap House serves sandwiches at night. There's a good selection of Virginia microbrews and wines by the glass.

199 S. Boundary St. ✆ **757/253-1847.** www.berrets.com. Reservations recommended for dinner. Sandwiches and salads (Tap House Grill only) $9–$15; main courses $16–$30. AE, DISC, MC, V. Restaurant daily 11:30am–3:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Tap House Grill daily 4–10pm.

Blue Talon Bistro ★★ Value FRENCH/AMERICAN "Serious comfort food" is the motto at this lively French-style bistro, although much of the comfort food has a

decidedly French flair. The menu ranges from American-style rotisserie chicken and cedar-roasted salmon to *salade Niçoise,* a meal in itself. You can also order a fat hamburger here anytime. Order-at-the-bar breakfast here is *très* French, with hot-out-of-the-oven croissants and other pastries.

420 Prince George St. ✆ **757/476-2583.** www.bluetalonbistro.com. Reservations recommended. Burgers $11; main courses $17–$25. DISC, MC, V. Daily 8–10:30am (breakfast only) and 11am–9pm.

The Cheese Shop (Value) DELI This gourmet deli is the best place in Williamsburg for takeout salads, sandwiches, and other fixings. Head to the rear counter and place your order for ham, roast beef, turkey, chicken, and barbecue sandwiches on a choice of fresh bread. The cheese counter has a wide selection of domestic and imported brands plus fresh salads. You can eat your meal at wrought-iron umbrella tables out front. The marvelous Fat Canary adjoins (see below). The wine shop in the basement carries more than 4,000 bottles from around the world.

410 Duke of Gloucester St. ✆ **757/220-0298.** www.cheeseshopwilliamsburg.com. Most items $5–$7. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 10am–8pm; Sun 11am–6pm.

A Chef's Kitchen ★★★ (Value) INTERNATIONAL Veteran chef John Gonzales, who has authored two cookbooks and appeared on several TV shows, says he started this fascinating cooking school–cum–restaurant because he "felt sorry for the audiences on the Food Network" who never get to eat the meals they watch being prepared. Here you not only will watch this entertaining chef at work, you will enjoy the fruits of his labors over the course of a 3-hour evening. The restaurant is designed like a culinary classroom, with 25 seats at three tables arranged stadium-style so that all can watch him at the kitchen up front. The one nightly seating begins at 6:30pm with champagne and hors d'oeuvres. Then John prepares and serves at least four more courses, each paired with an inexpensive "great find" wine (available in the gourmet store at the front of the building). The menu changes completely every few weeks but is announced in advance on the restaurant's website. The fixed price includes wine and the tip, making this a good value. Make your reservations as early as possible. John also teaches hands-on daytime classes.

501 Prince George St. ✆ **757/564-8500.** www.achefskitchen.biz. Reservations required. Fixed-price menu $75 per person, including tip. DISC, MC, V. Wed–Sat 6:30pm seating.

Fat Canary ★★★ AMERICAN This high-energy bistro is consistently Williamsburg's best restaurant. The sophisticated but relaxed dining room sports a long bar down one side—a favorite local watering hole—and an open kitchen that uses fresh local and other ingredients for its creative American fare. Both the full and more limited and less expensive menus are offered on the patio out front during warm weather. Reservations are not accepted at the outdoor tables, but it's worth the wait. Everything is excellent here. The restaurant's name comes from Colonial-era poet John Lyly's line, "Oh for a bowl of fat Canary, rich Palermo, sparkling sherry." By that he meant wines from the Canary Islands as well as Italy. Today's wine list is very good, with more than a dozen vintages available by the glass.

410 Duke of Gloucester St. ✆ **757/229-3333.** www.fatcanarywilliamsburg.com. Reservations recommended indoors, not accepted outdoors. Main courses $26–$38; outdoor light menu $12–$18. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 5–10pm.

Trellis Cafe, Restaurant & Grill AMERICAN Executive chef Marcel Desaulniers is best known for his *Death by Chocolate* dessert cookbook, whose namesake is the finest item offered here these days. The menu changes every season to take advantage of local

produce. The fixed-price dinner, which includes a salad or a bowl of soup, a main course, and ice cream or sorbet, is a money-saver, but I always upgrade the dessert to Marcel's sinful Death by Chocolate. If weather is fine, you can dine out on the brick terrace.

Duke of Gloucester St. ✆ **757/229-8610.** www.thetrellis.com. Reservations recommended at dinner. Main courses $18–$32; fixed-price dinners $30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 5–9:30pm.

Nearby Country-Style Dining

Old Chickahominy House ★★ TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN One of the great places to sample traditional, down-home Virginia cooking, the Old Chickahominy House is a reconstructed 18th-century house with mantels from old Gloucester homes and wainscoting from Carter's Grove Plantation. Floors are bare oak, and walls, painted in traditional Colonial colors, are hung with gilt-framed 17th- and 18th-century oil paintings. The adjoining rooms house an antiques/gift shop. The entire effect is cozy and charming. Before making my rounds, I often opt for the plantation breakfast of real Virginia ham with two eggs, biscuits, cured country bacon and sausage, grits, and coffee or tea. At lunch, Miss Melinda's special is a cup of Brunswick stew with Virginia ham on hot biscuits, canned fruit salad, homemade pie, and tea or coffee. Also check out the Shirley Pewter Shop next door.

1211 Jamestown Rd., at Va. 199. ✆ **757/229-4689.** Reservations not accepted. Most items $4–$9. MC, V. Mon–Thurs 8:30–10:30am and 11:30am–2:30pm; Fri 7:30–10:15am and 11:30am–2:30pm; Sat–Sun 7:30–10:15am and 11:45am–2:15pm. Closed 2 weeks in Jan, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que BARBECUE Visible from I-64, this gaudy yellow-and-orange barbecue joint has been dishing up pulled pork, chicken, and smoked ribs since 1961, as the walls hung with old photos of the owners and their family and staff will attest. The pulled pork is better than the ribs here; it comes soaked in a smoky-flavored, tomato-based sauce. Order at the counter and take your meal (served in plastic containers) to a table inside or outdoors under cover. No alcoholic beverages are served here.

447 E. Rochambeau Dr., Lightfoot (beside I-64). ✆ **757/565-2955.** Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches $3.50–$4.50; main courses $6.50–$19. MC, V. Daily 10am–9pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec. 25. From Historic Area go west on Richmond Rd. (U.S. 60), right on Airport Rd. (C.R. 645) 2 miles toward I-64, follow signs to restaurant on Rochambeau Dr., about 2 miles.

WILLIAMSBURG AFTER DARK

You should spend at least one evening taking in a little 18th-century nightlife in Colonial Williamsburg. The Colonial taverns have evening entertainment, but don't miss an **18th-Century Play** staged in and around the historic buildings.

Colonial Williamsburg also conducts nighttime tours and other activities in the Historic Area. Check the schedule in *This Week,* the weekly brochure. Copies are available at the visitor center (see "Exploring the Historic Area," earlier in this chapter).

Another fun way to spend a warm-weather evening is spooking around the Historic Area, either with one of Colonial Williamsburg's official tours or with the **Original Ghosts of Williamsburg Tours ★★** (✆ **877/62-GHOST** [624-4678] or 757/565-4821; www.theghosttour.com), which entertainingly blends ghost stories and local folklore with historical fact. Children will enjoy them, too. The candlelight tours are based on L. B. Taylor's best-selling 1983 book, *The Ghosts of Williamsburg.* The tours cost $11 per person (free for kids 5 and younger) and take place nightly March through December, Saturdays in January and February. Call for reservations, which are essential.

The **Kimball Theatre,** on Duke of Gloucester Street in Merchants Square (✆ **757/565-8588;** www.kimballtheatre.com), hosts concerts, special lectures by W&M

professors, puppet shows, second-run movies, and other events. Call or drop by the theater to see what's going on. William and Mary drama department students refine their skills in the **William and Mary Theater** (✆ **757/221-2676;** www.wm.edu). The college also has an active calendar of concerts and lectures. W&M's athletic teams participate in a full schedule of intercollegiate contests (✆ **757/221-3340;** www.tribeathletics.com).

For more ideas pick up a copy of *Williamsburg* magazine or check its website at www.williamsburgmag.com.

3 JAMESTOWN: THE FIRST COLONY ★★

9 miles SW of Williamsburg

The story of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the New World, is documented here in a national park on the Jamestown Island site where they landed. Here you'll learn the exploits of Capt. John Smith, the colony's leader, rescued from execution by the American Indian princess Pocahontas; the arrival of the first African-American slaves; and how life was lived in 17th-century Virginia. Archaeologists have excavated more than 100 building frames, evidence of manufacturing ventures (pottery, winemaking, brick making, and glass blowing), wells, and roads. Opened prior to Jamestown's big 400th-anniversary bash in 2007, the fascinating Archaearium museum displays hundreds of thousands of artifacts of everyday life—tools, utensils, ceramic dishes, armor, keys, and the like—uncovered during the digs.

Next door at Jamestown Settlement, a state-run living-history museum complex, you can see re-creations of the three ships in which the settlers arrived in 1607, the colony they built, and a typical American Indian village of the time.

Allow at least half a day for your visit and consider packing a lunch. There is a cafe at Jamestown Settlement, but you may want to take advantage of the picnic areas at the National Park Service site.

GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND The scenic way here from Williamsburg is via the picturesque Colonial Parkway, or you can take Jamestown Road (Va. 31).

An alternative to driving from Williamsburg from March through October is the **Historic Triangle Shuttle** (see "Getting to Jamestown & Yorktown," earlier in this chapter). Once you're here, the free **Jamestown Area Shuttle** (✆ **757/898-2410**) runs continuously between Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement.

Historic Jamestowne ★★★ Now part of the Colonial National Historical Park and jointly administered by the National Park Service and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA; www.apva.org), this is the site of the actual colony. It was an island then; now an isthmus separates it from the mainland. After entering the park, stop first at the reconstructed **Glasshouse,** where costumed interpreters make glass in the ancient way used by the colonists in 1608 during their first attempt to create an industry (it failed). Remains of the original glass furnaces are nearby. Then proceed to the visitor center, where a museum and a 15-minute film telling the story of Jamestown from its earliest days to 1699, when the capital of Virginia moved to Williamsburg, will get you oriented. Inquire at the reception desk about audiotape tours and ranger-led walking tours, costumed interpretive programs, and other programs offered during your visit.

Spend at least 30 minutes in the visitor center, which stands near the actual site of **"James Cittie,"** as the colonists called their new village. The center's exhibits and

Fun Facts A Shiny Hand

The statue of Pocahontas standing beside the old church at Historic Jamestowne is green, well-weathered brass—except her outstretched right hand. Legend says you'll have good luck if you shake her hand, which hundreds of people do every day, thus keeping it perpetually bright and shiny.

18-minute film put Jamestown in perspective with the rest of the world in 1607 and explain how the colonist lived. A pathway leads from the center over a marsh to the actual settlement. The brick foundations outside aren't original, but they do stand on the actual locations of the 17th-century homes as determined by extensive and very much ongoing archaeological work. You're welcome to view the digging, and APVA archaeologists and volunteers will answer your questions. Most of what's left of James Cittie is now about 18 inches below ground, but the tower of one of the first brick churches in Virginia (1639) still stands. Behind the tower, **Memorial Church** is a 1907 re-creation built by the Colonial Dames of America on the site of the structure (note the glass panels along the sides of the floor, which show some of the original foundation). In 1619, the church housed the first legislative assembly in English-speaking North America. A wooden stockade fence stands above the triangular borders of the 1607 **James Fort,** part of which has eroded into the James River.

A short walk along the seawall past Confederate breastworks—built during the Civil War to protect this narrow part of the river—will take you to the fascinating **Archaearium,** which artfully displays the results of the archaeological digs, including the skeleton of one of the settlers and a resin cast reproduction of another belonging to a young man who apparently died of a musket shot to the right knee, giving rise to the theme of the interactive display: "Who Shot J. R.?"

A fascinating **5-mile loop drive** begins at the visitor center parking lot and winds through 1,500 wilderness acres of woodland and marsh that have been allowed to return to their natural state in order to approximate the landscape as 17th-century settlers found it. Illustrative markers interpret aspects of daily activities and industries of the colonists—tobacco growing, lumbering, silk and wine production, pottery making, farming, and so on.

Allow at least 2 hours for this special attraction.

Southern end of Colonial Pkwy., at Jamestown Rd. (Va. 31). ✆ **757/898-2410** or 757/229-1773. www.nps.gov/colo. Admission $10 adults, free for children 15 and younger. Includes admission to Yorktown Battlefield, good for 7 days. America the Beautiful and National Park Service passports accepted. Main gate daily 8:30am–4:30pm; visitor center daily 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

Jamestown Settlement ★★ Kids Built in 1957 by the Commonwealth of Virginia to celebrate Jamestown's 350th anniversary, this living-history museum shows you what the settlers' three ships, their colony, and a typical Powhatan Indian village looked like, and costumed interpreters demonstrate how they lived back then.

The entrance building shows a 20-minute film, *1607: A Nation Takes Root,* about Jamestown and has museum galleries featuring artifacts, documents, decorative objects, dioramas, and graphics relating to the Jamestown period. Don't miss the exact reproduction of the deerskin-and-seashells cape worn by Powhatan, father of Pocahontas (the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England, has the original).

Leaving the museum complex, you'll come directly into the **Powhatan Indian Village,** representing the culture and technology of a highly organized chiefdom of 32 tribes that inhabited coastal Virginia in the early 17th century. There are several mat-covered lodges, which are furnished as dwellings, as well as a vegetable garden and a circle of carved ceremonial posts. Historical interpreters tend crop, tan animal hides, and make bone and stone tools and pottery. The exhibits are interactive, assigning such activities as having you use a shell to scrape the fur off deerskin. Children are more likely to enjoy a visit here than to Historic Jamestowne.

Triangular **James Fort** is a re-creation of the one constructed by the Jamestown colonists in the spring of 1607. Inside the wooden stockade are primitive wattle-and-daub structures with thatched roofs representing Jamestown's earliest buildings. Interpreters are engaged in activities typical of early-17th-century life, such as agriculture, military activities (including firing muskets), carpentry, blacksmithing, and meal preparation.

A short walk from James Fort are reproductions of the three **ships,** the *Susan Constant, Godspeed,* and *Discovery,* that transported the 104 colonists to Virginia. Boarding and exploring the ships will give you an appreciation of the hardships they endured even before they reached the hostile New World.

A guided 1½-hour tour is the best way to take all this in. They are given several times a day.

Jamestown Rd. (Va. 31), at James River. ✆ **888/593-4682** or 757/253-4838. www.historyisfun.org. Admission $14 adults, $6.50 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Combination ticket with Yorktown Victory Center $19 adults, $9.25 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Daily 9am–5pm (to 6pm June 15–Aug 15). Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

4 YORKTOWN: REVOLUTIONARY VICTORY ★★★

14 miles NE of Williamsburg

Although the 13 American colonies declared their independence from England on July 4, 1776, their dream of freedom from King George III came to fruition here at Yorktown in October 1781, when Gen. George Washington and his French allies won the last major battle of the American Revolution. "I have the Honor to inform Congress that a Reduction of the British Army under the Command of Lord Cornwallis is most happily effected," Washington wrote to the Continental Congress on October 19, 1781. Though sporadic fighting would continue for 2 years before a treaty was signed, the Revolutionary War, for all intents and purposes, was over.

Today, the decisive battlefield is a national park, and the Commonwealth of Virginia has built the Yorktown Victory Center, an interpretive museum explaining the road to revolution, the war itself, and the building of a new nation afterward.

Predating the Revolution and overlooking the picturesque York River, the old town of Yorktown itself is worth a visit, especially its re-created Colonial-era seaport village at **Yorktown Riverwalk Landing,** on Water Street almost beneath the Coleman Bridge, which carries U.S. 17 over the York River. Here you'll find shops, a restaurant, and a museum dedicated to the Chesapeake Bay's famous "watermen."

You'll need at least half a day to digest all this history. Plan to spend a morning or afternoon seeing the sights and having lunch.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION For advance information, contact **York County Tourism and Events,** P.O. Box 523, Yorktown, VA 23690 (✆ **757/890-3300;** www.yorkcounty.gov/tourism).

GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND The easiest and most scenic way here from Williamsburg is via the picturesque Colonial Parkway. From Norfolk or Virginia Beach, take I-64 West to U.S. 17 North and follow the signs to Yorktown. Park free in the garage at the Yorktown Riverwalk Landing on Water Street.

A good alternative to driving here from Williamsburg during the summer is the **Historic Triangle Shuttle** (see "Getting to Jamestown & Yorktown," earlier in this chapter). Once you're here, the free **Yorktown Trolley** makes nine stops along the waterfront and in the village from mid-March through October, every 20 to 25 minutes daily.

HISTORY

Yorktown's history dates to 1691, when the General Assembly at Jamestown passed the Port Act creating a new town on the York River, which unlike the James River, has a shoal-free, deepwater channel to the Chesapeake Bay. Yorktown quickly became a principal mid-Atlantic port and a center of tobacco trade. By the time of the American Revolution, it was a thriving town with several thousand planters, innkeepers, seamen, merchants, craftsmen, indentured servants, and slaves. Water Street, paralleling the river, was lined with shops, inns, and loading docks.

THE VICTORY AT YORKTOWN After a rather fruitless and exhausting march through the Carolinas, Cornwallis brought his army to Yorktown in hopes of being moved to New York by the British navy. Marching quickly from the north, George Washington's army of 17,600 American troops and their French allies laid siege to Yorktown on September 28, 1781. Meanwhile, a French fleet sailed up from the Caribbean and held the British navy away from the Virginia Capes, thereby cutting off Cornwallis' escape route.

On October 9, the allies began bombarding the British positions. Washington personally fired the first American round. At 8pm on October 14, the French stormed Redoubt 9 while the Americans made short work of Redoubt 10.

Just 2 days later, a desperate Cornwallis tried to escape with his troops across the York River to Gloucester Point, but a violent storm scattered his boats. On October 17 at 10am, a British drummer appeared on the rampart and beat out a signal indicating a desire to discuss terms with the enemy. A ceasefire was called, and a British officer was led to American lines where he requested an armistice. On October 18, commissioners met at the house of Augustine Moore and worked out the terms of surrender.

At 2pm on October 19, 1781, the French and Continental armies lined Surrender Road, each stretching for over a mile on either side. About 5,000 British soldiers and seamen, clad in new uniforms, marched out of Yorktown to a large field, where they laid down their weapons and battle flags. Gen. Charles O'Hara of the British Guards represented Cornwallis who, pleading illness, did not surrender in person.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Yorktown Battlefield ★★★ Today, most of Yorktown and the surrounding battlefield areas are included in this 4,300-acre section of the Colonial National Historical Park. You can drive around the key battle sites, which have interpretive markers, but begin at the visitor center, where the 16-minute documentary film *Siege at Yorktown* is

Tips Best Battlefield Strategies

You'll enjoy the 90-minute audio driving-tour tape or CD of the Yorktown battlefield. Narrated by "British and American colonels" whose polite hostilities to each other are most amusing, the taped commentary further elucidates the battlefield sites. Listen to the introduction in the parking lot; it will tell you when to depart. Tape or not, drive the Battlefield Route first; then if time permits, the Encampment Route.

shown on the hour and half-hour. Not to be missed among the museum displays is Washington's actual sleeping and dining tent, now preserved in a hermetically sealed room (it's really cool to actually walk into his tent without entering the glass-enclosed room). There's also a replica (which you can board and explore) of the quarterdeck of HMS *Charon;* additional objects recovered during excavations; exhibits about Cornwallis's surrender and the events leading up to it; and dioramas detailing the siege. Upstairs, an "on-the-scene" account of the Battle of Yorktown is given by a 13-year-old soldier in the Revolutionary army, his taped narrative accompanied by a sound-and-light show.

National Park Service Rangers are on hand to answer questions. They give free **tours** of the British inner defense line seasonally (call the visitor center for times).

To make it easy to follow what happened, the park is divided into two routes. You won't stay in your car the whole time; it's frequently necessary to park, get out, and walk to redoubts and earthworks. A lot of the drive is very scenic, winding through woods and fields abundant with bird life. The Encampment Route is especially beautiful.

On the 7-mile **Battlefield Route,** you'll see the **Grand French Battery,** where French soldiers manning cannons, mortars, and howitzers fired on British and German mercenary troops; the **Moore House,** where British and American representatives hammered out the surrender on October 18, 1781; and **Surrender Field,** where the British laid down their arms at the end of the siege.

Note that the Moore House usually is open daily 10am to 4:30pm during summer, weekends 1 to 4pm in spring and autumn, but check with the visitor center to be sure. The 10-mile **Encampment Route** takes you to the sites of Washington's and Rochambeau's headquarters, the French cemetery and Artillery Park, and allied encampment sites.

North end of Colonial Pkwy. ✆ **757/898-2410** or 898-3400. www.nps.gov/colo. Admission $10 adults, free for children 15 and younger. Includes admission to Yorktown Battlefield, good for 7 days. America the Beautiful and National Park Service passports accepted. Audiotape CDs $4.95. National Park Service passports accepted. Battlefield daily 8:30am–dusk. Visitor center daily 9am–5pm (closed Dec 25).

Yorktown Victory Center ★ This state-operated multimedia museum offers an excellent orientation to Yorktown, and coming here first will prepare you for your battlefield tour. You'll start with an open-air timeline walkway known as the "Road to Revolution," which illustrates the relationship between the colonies and Great Britain beginning in 1750. Aspects of the American Revolution are explored in its gallery exhibits. "Witnesses to Revolution" focuses on ordinary individuals who recorded their observances of the war and its impact on their lives. The "Converging on Yorktown" gallery and *A Time of Revolution* film focus on the military campaign. "Yorktown's Sunken Fleet" uses artifacts recovered from British ships sunk during the siege of Yorktown to describe

shipboard life. "The Legacy of Yorktown: Virginia Beckons" examines how people from many different cultures shaped a new American society.

Outdoors, costumed interpreters in the Continental Army encampment re-create the lives of men and women who took part in the American Revolution. There are presentations on weaponry, military drills and tactics, medicine, and cookery. Nearby, an 18th-century farm site demonstrates how "middling" farmers—no wealthy plantation owners here—lived and worked.

Colonial Pkwy., ½ mile west of Yorktown. ✆ **888/593-4682** or 757/253-4838. www.historyisfun.org. Admission $9.25 adults, $5 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Combination ticket with Jamestown Settlement $19 adults, $9.25 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Daily 9am–5pm (to 6pm June 15–Aug 15). Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

TOURING THE TOWN

Though it is doubtful that Yorktown would have recovered from the destruction and waste that accompanied the Siege of 1781, it received the coup de grâce in the "Great Fire" of 1814 and declined steadily over the years, becoming a quiet rural village. Although it remains the seat of York County, it never regained its prominence as a seaport and has, like Williamsburg, changed so little that many of its picturesque old streets and buildings (whose walls escaped the fire) have survived intact to this day.

Self-guided or ranger-led walking tours of historic Yorktown—which includes some places of interest not related to the famed battle—are available at the Yorktown Battlefield visitor center (call for times; see listing above). From the visitor center, take the path to:

THE VICTORY MONUMENT News of the allied victory at Yorktown reached Philadelphia on October 24, 1781. Five days later, Congress resolved "that the United States . . . will cause to be erected at York, in Virginia, a marble column, adorned with emblems of the alliance between the United States and his Most Christian Majesty; and inscribed with a succinct narrative of the surrender of Earl Cornwallis to his excellency General Washington, Commander in Chief of the combined forces of America and France."

So much for government intentions: The cornerstone of the symbolic 98-foot marble shaft with Lady Liberty atop was laid a century later to open the Yorktown Centennial Celebration. The podium is adorned with 13 female figures hand in hand in a solemn dance to denote the unity of the 13 colonies; beneath their feet is the inscription "One Country, One Constitution, One Destiny"—a moving post–Civil War sentiment.

A footpath leads from the monument into town, where you can explore:

CORNWALLIS CAVE According to legend, Cornwallis lived here in two tiny "rooms" during the final days of the siege when he hoped to cross the river and escape overland to New York. Various occupants of the cave—which may at one time have included the pirate Blackbeard—carved out the two rooms. Confederate soldiers later enlarged the shelter and added a roof. The cave is at the foot of Great Valley Road, right on the river.

From here you can follow Water Street along the river and Yorktown's white-sand beach (locals like to sunbathe and swim here) to **Yorktown Riverwalk Landing,** the town's waterfront dining-and-shopping complex.

THE DUDLEY DIGGES HOUSE This 18th-century weather-board house on Main Street at Smith Street is the only wood-frame house to survive the siege. Owner Dudley Digges was a Revolutionary patriot who served with Patrick Henry, Benjamin Harrison,

Of Bug-Eyes & Skipjacks

On Water Street adjacent to the Yorktown Riverwalk Landing, the **Watermen's Museum** (✆ **757/887-2641;** www.watermens.org) displays a bug-eye, a skipjack, a dug-out canoe, and other working boats unique to the Chesapeake Bay, plus oyster harvesting tools and other equipment used by the region's famous "watermen" to earn their livings. Admission is $5 for adults, $2 for students, free for kids 5 and younger. It's open April through December, Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 5pm.

While at the Yorktown Riverwalk, you can get out on the York River on the ***Alliance*** (✆ **800/979-3370;** www.schooneralliance.com), a 105-foot long, three-mast tall ship schooner that makes three cruises daily between May and October. The 2-hour voyages cost $30 for adults, $18 for children 12 and younger. It also has sunset cruises for $35 per person.

and Thomas Jefferson on the Committee of Correspondence. After the war, he was rector of the College of William and Mary. It's still a private residence, not open to the public.

THE NELSON HOUSE Scottish merchant Thomas Nelson made three voyages between Great Britain and Virginia before deciding to settle in Yorktown in 1705. He became co-operator of a ferry, charter member of a trading company, builder of the Swan Tavern, and a large-scale planter. In 1729, he built this house, at Main and Nelson streets, which is considered one of the finest examples of Georgian architecture in Virginia. His grandson, Thomas Nelson, Jr., signed the Declaration of Independence, served as governor of Virginia during the war, and marched the 3,500-man state militia to Yorktown to help Washington win the victory. The Revolution ruined his health and fortune, however, and he died in 1789.

Though damaged (cannonballs remain embedded in the brickwork), the house survived the Battle of Yorktown, and the Nelson family continued to live in it until 1907. The National Park Service acquired the house in 1968 and restored it to its original appearance.

It's open daily 10am to 4:30pm in summer, daily 1 to 4pm the rest of the year.

THE SESSIONS HOUSE Just across from the Nelson House, this is the oldest house in Yorktown, built in 1692 by Thomas Sessions. At least five U.S. presidents have visited the house, today a private residence.

THE CUSTOM HOUSE Dating to 1720, this brick building at the corner of Main and Read was originally the private storehouse of Richard Ambler, collector of ports. It became Gen. J. B. Magruder's headquarters during the Civil War.

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH On Church Street near the river, Grace Church dates to 1697 and has been an active house of worship since then. Its first rector, the Rev. Anthony Panton, was dismissed for calling the secretary of the colony a jackanapes. Gunpowder and ammunition were stored here during the siege of Yorktown. During the Civil War, the church served as a hospital. It's open to visitors daily 9am to 5pm. The communion silver, made in England in 1649, is still in use. Thomas Nelson, Jr., is buried in the adjacent graveyard.

THE SWAN TAVERN For over a century the Swan Tavern, at the corner of Main and Ballard streets (✆ **757/898-3033**), was Yorktown's leading hostelry. Originally owned by Thomas Nelson, it was in operation 20 years before Williamsburg's famous Raleigh Tavern. The Swan was demolished in 1863 by an ammunition explosion at the courthouse across the street, rebuilt, and destroyed again by fire in 1915. Today it is reconstructed as per historical research, and the premises house a fine 18th-century antiques shop. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 12:30 to 5pm.

THE POOR POTTER Constructed on the site of Yorktown's original pottery factory on Read Street, inland from the Custom House, this reconstruction shows how the locals produced pottery of better quality than their English cousins were making back home.

WHERE TO DINE

Carrot Tree Yorktown SANDWICHES/SALADS Occupying the Cole Diggs House, Yorktown's oldest brick residence (ca. 1720), this sandwich shop is a good place for refreshment during your walking tour of town. The house was restored by the National Park Service, which won't allow a stove inside for safety reasons. Consequently, many items are prepared in Williamsburg and heated in a microwave oven here. It's good stuff nevertheless. Check out the pastries in the chiller box by the front door; they make a fine snack. Lunch sees salads, barbecue, Brunswick stew, and made-to-order sandwiches.

411 Main St. (at Read St.). ✆ **757/246-9559.** www.carrottreekitchens.com. Reservations recommended for dinner. Most items $5–$14. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–3:30pm; Fri–Sat 11am–3:30pm and 5–8:30pm.

Nick's Riverwalk Restaurant ★ AMERICAN The main tenant in Yorktown Riverwalk Landing, this interesting if not gourmet restaurant stretches across the waterfront side of the complex, affording excellent views of the river and the Coleman Bridge almost overhead. It really is two restaurants, each with its own kitchen. On the one hand is the more refined **Riverwalk Restaurant;** on the other, the casual and somewhat less expensive **Rivah Café.** The latter has outdoor seating in fine weather. Both feature all-American fare, including my favorite, grilled fresh tuna.

323 Water St. (in Yorktown Riverwalk Landing). ✆ **757/875-1522.** www.riverwalkrestaurant.net. Reservations recommended in dining room. Dining room main courses $17–$29; Rivah Café sandwiches $9–$15. AE, DISC, MC, V. Dining room Sun–Thurs 11:30am–2:30pm and 5–9pm; Rivah Café daily 11:30am–3:30pm and 4:30–9pm.

5 JAMES RIVER PLANTATIONS

While Williamsburg was the political capital of Virginia during the 18th century, its economic livelihood depended on the great tobacco plantations beside the James River. Several of the mansions built during that period of wealthy landowners still stand today between Williamsburg and Richmond, some occupied to this day by the same families that have produced generals, governors, and two presidents. Two of them are open to the public, providing an authentic feel for 18th-century plantation life.

SEEING THE PLANTATIONS

Plantations are on both sides of the James River, but the easiest to visit are on John Tyler Highway (Va. 5) between Williamsburg and Richmond. From Williamsburg, take

Moments Virginia Is for Gardens

Garden Week in Virginia, during the last week in April, is the ideal time to visit the plantations. All the grounds are at their magnificent, full-bloom best then. It's also the only time that the manor house at **Westover,** which shares Berkeley's lane off Va. 5 (✆ **804/829-2882**), is open to the public. Richmond's founder, William Byrd II, built this beautiful Georgian manor house in the 1730s directly on the banks of the James. You can walk around the grounds and gardens year-round, daily 9am to 6pm. Admission is an honorary $2 for adults, 50¢ for children 15 and under. The grounds at **Sherwood Forrest Plantation,** 14501 John Tyler Hwy./Va. 5 (✆ **804/282-1441;** www.sherwoodforest.org), also are open to the public daily 9am to 5pm. Admission is $5 adults, free for children under 16. Sherwood Forrest, the longest wood frame house in the U.S., was home of U.S. President John Tyler, whose descendants still live here.

Jamestown Road and bear right on Va. 5. From Richmond, take Main Street east, which becomes Va. 5. This so-called Plantation Route covers a distance of 55 miles between Williamsburg and Richmond and makes an excellent scenic driving tour between the two cities. You can easily see them in half a day.

See **www.charlescity.org** for information about accommodations and dining in this area.

Berkeley Plantation ★ The aristocratic Harrison family bought Berkeley in 1691. Benjamin Harrison III made it a prosperous operation, and in 1726 his son, Benjamin Harrison IV, built the three-story Georgian mansion. Benjamin Harrison V was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and thrice governor of Virginia. The next generation produced William Henry Harrison, the frontier fighter whose nickname "Old Tippecanoe" helped him get elected as our ninth president. His grandson, another Benjamin Harrison, took the presidential oath 47 years later. George Washington was a frequent guest, and every president through Tyler enjoyed Berkeley's gracious hospitality.

Berkeley was twice occupied by invading troops. During the American Revolution, a British army under Benedict Arnold burned the family portraits, practiced target shooting on the cows, and went off with 40 slaves. During the Civil War, Gen. George McClellan's Union army trampled the gardens and chopped up the elegant furnishings for firewood.

The Harrisons never returned to live at Berkeley after the Civil War. John Jamieson, a Scottish-born New Yorker who had served as a drummer in McClellan's army, purchased the disfigured manor house and 1,400 acres in 1907. His son, Malcolm, completely restored the house and grounds to their appearance in the early days of the Harrisons' tenure. Allow 1½ hours to see a 10-minute audiovisual presentation, take a 45-minute guided tour of the house, and explore the magnificent grounds and gardens.

12602 Harrison Landing Rd. (off Va. 5), 30 miles west of Williamsburg. ✆ **888/466-6018** or 804/829-6018. www.berkeleyplantation.com. Admission $11 adults, $7.50 children 13–16, $6 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Daily 9am–4:30pm (last tour 4:30pm). Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25.

Shirley Plantation ★★★ Described by one architectural historian as "the most intact 18th-century estate in Virginia," Shirley was founded beside the James River in

Fun Facts The First Thanksgiving

On December 4, 1619, 38 English settlers sent by the Berkeley Company put ashore after a 3-month voyage. They fell on their knees in a prayer of thanksgiving. If you're here the first Sunday of November, you can participate in the annual commemoration of that first Thanksgiving in the New World.

1613, making it Virginia's oldest plantation. It's also America's oldest family-owned business, begun in 1638. The plantation manse was built between 1723 and 1738 by Shirley heiress Elizabeth Hill and her husband, John Carter, eldest son of Robert "King" Carter, the richest man in the colonies (it was King Carter who financed Historic Christ Church in Irvington on the Northern Neck; p. 113). Their granddaughter, Anne Hill Carter, was born, grew up, and married Virginia governor and Revolutionary War hero Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee here. Their son, Robert E. Lee, made his own place in history. The extraordinarily well-preserved mansion is noted for its carved "flying staircase"—it rises three stories with no visible means of support—and Queen Anne forecourt flanked by the kitchen and other dependent buildings, both the only remaining examples of this architectural style in America. Now in its 11th generation, the Carter family continues to operate Shirley as a working plantation. After the 30-minute tour, allow at least another 30 minutes to explore the grounds and dependencies of this National Historic Landmark.

501 Shirley Plantation Rd. (off Va. 5), Charles City, 35 miles west of Williamsburg. ✆ **800/232-1613** or 804/829-5121. www.shirleyplantation.com. Admission $11 adults, $10 seniors, $7.50 children 6–18, free for children 5 and younger. Daily 9:30am–4:30pm (last tour 4:15pm). 30-min. house tours depart every half-hour. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25.

6 A DAY TRIP TO HAMPTON & NEWPORT NEWS

Jamestown was barely 2 years old when Capt. John Smith sent a contingent of men to build a fort on the Hampton River, strategically located on the western shore of Hampton Roads. The colony's first seaport, there's been a town here since 1610, making Hampton the nation's oldest continuously English-speaking settlement. It was here in 1718 that British troops displayed the head of Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard the Pirate, whom they killed during a furious battle on North Carolina's Outer Banks. His captured crew was dispatched to the gallows in Williamsburg.

Unfortunately, there are few remaining structures from those early days other than the U.S. Army's **Fort Monroe,** for during the Civil War a Confederate general ordered the town burned to the ground rather than permit Union forces holding the fort to quarter troops and former slaves here. You can visit the Fort Monroe room where Confederate president Jefferson Davis was imprisoned after the war, the fine museum at Hampton University, and the very modern Virginia Air and Space Center, a smaller but excellent rendition of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Named for Christopher Newport, skipper of the *Discovery,* one of the three ships that brought the Jamestown settlers to Virginia, Newport News also dates back to the early 1600s and has a long maritime tradition. The city is home to the Mariners' Museum, the largest maritime museum in the Western Hemisphere, and home to the remains of the USS *Monitor.*

Hampton has enough interesting sights to take up most of a day trip from Williamsburg. The Mariners' Museum is on the way to Hampton, so you can spend part of the morning there on the way. You can also visit both cities on day excursions from Norfolk and Virginia Beach (see chapter 12).

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION For advance information, contact the **Hampton Convention and Visitor Bureau,** 1919 Commerce Dr., Hampton, VA 23666 (✆ **800/800-2202** or 757/727-1102; fax 757/727-6712; www.hamptoncvb.com).

For information about Newport News, contact the **Newport News Tourism Development Office,** 700 Town Center Dr., Ste. 320, Newport News, VA 23606 (✆ **888/493-7386** or 757/926-1400; fax 757/926-1441; www.newport-news.org). The walk-in **Newport News Visitor Center** is in Newport News Park, 13560 Jefferson Ave., south of Fort Eustis Boulevard near Exit 250 off I-64 (✆ **888/493-7386** or 757/886-7777). It's open daily from 9am to 5pm except Thanksgiving and Christmas.

With 8,000 acres, **Newport News Park,** 13560 Jefferson Ave. (✆ **757/888-3333;** www.nnparks.com), is the largest municipal park east of the Mississippi River and has one of the best campgrounds in Virginia.

GETTING THERE From Williamsburg, take I-64 East. To reach downtown Hampton, take Exit 267 and turn right on Settlers Landing Road and cross the Hampton River to the visitor center (a left turn at the exit will take you to Fort Monroe and the Casemate Museum via the village of Poquoson). To reach the Mariners' Museum, take Exit 258 and follow J. Clyde Morris Boulevard (U.S. 17) south; the museum is at the southern end of the boulevard. From Norfolk and Virginia Beach, take I-64 West through the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to these exits.

Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport (**PHF;** ✆ **757/877-0221;** www.nnwairport.com) is here, and **Amtrak** (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) has daily service to its station in Newport News.

ATTRACTIONS IN HAMPTON

The Hampton Convention and Visitor Bureau shares quarters with the **Hampton History Museum,** 1919 Commerce Dr. (✆ **757/727-1610;** www.hampton1610.com), where you can learn of the city's past. The visitor center is open daily 9am to 5pm; the museum, Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 1 to 5pm. Both are closed New

Tips Saving with a Hampton Day Pass

You can buy a **Hampton Day Pass** and visit both the Virginia Air & Space Center and the Hampton History Museum, take a *Miss Hampton II* cruise, and ride the Hampton Carousel for $31 adults, $21 for children 12 to 18, free for kids 11 and under. The attractions sell them, as does the Hampton Convention and Visitor Bureau.

Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Admission to the museum is $5 adults, $4 seniors and children 4 to 12, free for kids 3 and under.

In its own air-conditioned pavilion next to the Virginia Air & Space Center (see below), the **Hampton Carousel** (✆ **757/727-6381**) is a painstakingly restored 1920s merry-go-round that anyone of any age will enjoy riding. The 48 original horses—so intricately carved you can see their veins—go up and down to the sounds of organ music. Rides cost $2. The carousel is open in summer Monday to Friday from noon to 5pm, Saturday 10am to 7pm, Sunday noon to 7pm. Off-season hours are Friday to Sunday noon to 5pm.

The Casemate Museum ★ The Casemate Museum is a must-see for Civil War buffs; Confederate president Jefferson Davis was imprisoned in the bowels of **Fort Monroe** in 1865 after being captured in Georgia. The accusation that he had participated in Lincoln's assassination was disproved, and Davis was released in 1867. Located at the tip of a peninsula and surrounded by a moat, the fort was built between 1819 and 1834 and is the largest brick fort in the United States. Robert E. Lee served as second in command of the construction detachment in 1831 when he was a young officer in the Army Corps of Engineers, and Edgar Allen Poe spent 16 months here in 1828 and 1829 as an enlisted man. During the Civil War it became known as "Freedom Fortress" as escaped slaves who entered its gates were considered to be "contrabands of war" and thus free. The dungeon-like casemates, where Davis was held, were designed as storage for seacoast artillery. After 1861, they were modified to serve as living quarters for soldiers and their families. You'll need about 45 minutes in the museum to view displays of military memorabilia and Davis's sparsely furnished quarters (his intricately carved pipe—an egg-shaped bowl clenched in an eagle's claw—is outside the door). **Tours** can be arranged in advance by contacting the museum. You will need to show a picture ID in order to get into Fort Monroe.

Note: The fort will be closed as a federal installation in 2011. What happens to the Casemate Museum will depend on whether the property is turned over to the Commonwealth of Virginia or some other entity.

Fort Monroe. ✆ **757/788-3391.** www.monroe.army.mil/monroe/sites/installation/museum/casemate_museum.aspx. Free admission. Daily 10:30am–4:30pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From I-64 take Exit 267. From downtown Hampton, take Settlers Landing Rd. east across Hampton River bridge and under I-64 into Phoebus, take right fork onto County St., turn right on Mallory St., left on Mellen St., straight into Fort Monroe. Follow signs to museum.

Hampton University Museum ★ Across the river from downtown, Hampton University was founded in 1868 to provide an education for newly freed African Americans. Its graduates include Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and whose birthplace is preserved near Lynchburg (see chapter 7). Near the campus entrance stand the Emancipation Oak Trees, where the Emancipation Proclamation was read to the people of Hampton for the first time in 1863. Four other landmarks are nearby, including the imposing Memorial Chapel (1886). The museum is noted for its fine collection of African-American art, including a significant number of Harlem Renaissance paintings. Don't miss the works by Henry O. Tanner, including his renowned *The Banjo Lesson.* It also has notable holdings of African art, including one of the world's first collections of Kuba art from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rivaling the African collection is the Native American collection, which includes works from 93 tribes; it was established in 1878, when the federal government began sending Native Americans from reservations in the West to be educated at Hampton.

Huntington Building, Hampton University. ✆ **757/727-5308.** http://museum.hamptonu.edu. Free admission. Mon–Fri 8am–5pm; Sat noon–4pm. Closed major holidays. From downtown Hampton, take Settlers Landing Rd. across the Hampton River and follow signs to the university and museum.

Virginia Air & Space Center ★★ Kids A stunning glass-fronted futuristic structure on the edge of Hampton's riverfront, this museum chronicles the history of aviation and space travel and also serves as the official visitor center for NASA's Langley Research Center and Langley Air Force Base. There's a 3-billion-year-old rock brought back from the moon by Apollo 17. In the main gallery, about 10 air vehicles are suspended from the 94-foot vaulted ceiling, and below sits the *Apollo 12* command module—complete with reentry burn marks. The Riverside 3-D IMAX Theater shows 45-minute films about flying and space as well as full-length features such as the Harry Potter movies. There are no guided tours; allow at least 2 hours to explore it all on your own, more if you see a movie.

600 Settlers Landing Rd. (at King St.). ✆ **757/727-0900.** www.vasc.org. Admission $9.50 adults, $8.50 seniors and military, $7.50 children 3–11, free for children 2 and younger. IMAX flying film $8 adults, $7 seniors, $6.75 children 3–11. Combination tickets including IMAX films available. Memorial Day to Labor Day Mon–Wed 10am–5pm, Thurs–Sun 10am–7pm; off season Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm.

HARBOR CRUISES

The most popular harbor cruises in Virginia are on the ***Miss Hampton II,*** 764 Settlers Landing Rd. (✆ **888/757-2628** or 757/722-9102; www.misshamptoncruises.com), a 65-foot passenger boat that sails from downtown across Hampton Roads and within sight of the huge U.S. naval base at Norfolk. You'll pass the landing site of the Jamestown settlers and Blackbeard's Point, where the pirate's head was displayed in 1718, and the pre–Civil War **Fort Wool,** on a 15-acre island out in the Chesapeake. The narrated 3-hour cruises depart from the town dock, on Settlers Landing Road beside the Radisson Hampton hotel. Departures usually are Tuesday through Saturday at 10am and 2pm from Memorial Day through Labor Day; Tuesday through Saturday at 10am in April, May, September, and October; but call ahead to be sure. Fares are $23 for adults, $21 for seniors and military, $12 for children 6 to 12, free for kids younger than 6.

A MARITIME MUSEUM IN NEWPORT NEWS

The Mariners' Museum ★★★ My parents brought my sister Jean and me to this outstanding museum when I was about 12 years old, which may have influenced me to later become an officer in the United States Navy, so well does it tell the story of men who have gone down to the sea in ships. It's the largest maritime museum in the Western Hemisphere. The highlight today is its **USS *Monitor* Center,** which houses the remains of the famous Union ironclad. The *Monitor* sank off Cape Hatteras after her stalemate battle with the CSS *Virginia* (formerly the USS *Merrimac)* on Hampton Roads in 1862. Divers in the 1990s recovered her round, one-gun turret, which is kept here in a perpetual bath of salt water to prevent it from rusting. You can actually walk into a remarkable, full-size reproduction of the turret exactly as it was found, lying upside down, on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, a crewman's skeleton clearly visible. Hundreds of other artifacts—including handwritten letters—also are on display.

Elsewhere in the museum, handcrafted ship models, scrimshaw, maritime paintings, decorative arts, working steam engines, and more are displayed in spacious galleries. Shown on the hour and half-hour, an 18-minute film narrated by James Earl Jones discusses maritime activity the world over. There usually are two guided tours per day

Monday to Friday (call for schedule). Docents lead guided tours on request. The museum is in a pleasant 550-acre park setting, with a lake, picnic areas, and walking trails. There's a cafe, and the gift shop sells quality nautical items.

100 Museum Dr. ✆ **757/596-2222.** www.mariner.org. Admission $14 adults, $12 seniors, $13 students, $8 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25. From I-64, take Exit 258A, follow J. Clyde Morris Blvd. (U.S. 17) south to intersection with Warwick Blvd. (U.S. 60), go straight on Museum Dr.

12

Norfolk, Virginia Beach & the Eastern Shore

The Jamestown colonists first set foot in the New World at Cape Henry on April 26, 1607. Although they stayed just long enough to plant a cross in the sand and give thanks for their safe passage from England, later generations did decide to live here—lots of them, including some of my close relatives.

Today, the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, and Chesapeake comprise a megalopolis of nearly a million people sprawling along the southern shores of Hampton Roads, one of the world's largest natural harbors.

Norfolk and Portsmouth have been important seaports since being founded in 1682 and 1752, respectively. They were fought over often during the Civil War, including the famous battle between the first ironclads, USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia* (nee *Merrimac),* out on Hampton Roads.

Indeed, the navy still rules here, for this area has America's largest concentration of naval bases, which add enormously to its economy.

The sailors once made Norfolk a bawdy seaport, but the city has rebuilt its downtown into a vibrant center of shopping, dining, and sightseeing. Norfolk's attractions include Virginia's best art museum, a marvelous botanical garden, and the state zoo.

A brief ferry ride across the Elizabeth River takes you on an easy excursion to Portsmouth's gentrified Olde Towne, whose rich architecture may remind you of Charleston and Savannah.

A sprawling suburb for most of the year, Virginia Beach sees its population more than double during the summer, when 20 miles of uninterrupted sand and surf draw vacationers from around the globe. With a host of outdoor activities, a multitude of hotels, and close proximity to the other cities, it's no mystery why most visitors make "VaBeach" (as locals refer to the oceanfront area) their base for exploring this area.

From Virginia Beach, the 17-mile engineering marvel known as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel will whisk you north to a different world: Virginia's rural Eastern Shore. Here you will visit Chincoteague Island, home of an ancient fishing village, and its neighbor, Assateague Island, site of a magnificent national seashore and a wildlife refuge teeming with birds and the famous wild ponies of Assateague.

1 NORFOLK ★

190 miles SE of Washington, D.C.; 93 miles E of Richmond; 17 miles W of Virginia Beach

Downtown Norfolk was notorious for its sailor bars when I was growing up about 75 miles south of here. For many years, in fact, we didn't go into downtown Norfolk. That's not true now, for the city has undergone a notable renaissance. Today, the rowdy joints are out in suburban strip malls, replaced by a vibrant, modern downtown of high-rise offices, condominiums, marinas, museums, shops, nightspots, a 12,000-seat minor league baseball park, and a downtown cruise-ship terminal. The MacArthur Center, a

Tips Avoiding Gridlock

Hampton Roads has some of Virginia's most congested traffic. Lengthy backups can occur anytime on I-64 at the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel between Norfolk and Hampton, especially during weekday rush hours and all day on summer weekends. I take U.S. 460 from Petersburg to Norfolk on summer weekends, thus avoiding both the Hampton Roads and Monitor-Merrimac bridge-tunnels. U.S. 13 is another alternate route if you're coming from the northeast. If you're approaching on I-64 from the west, an alternative is to take I-664 and the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge-Tunnel, then Va. 164 east to Portsmouth and the Midtown Tunnel (U.S. 58) into Norfolk. Tune your radio to 610 AM or call ✆ **800/792-2800** on your cellphone to check on current conditions.

shopping mall just a few blocks from the riverfront, now dominates downtown. More condos and office buildings are going up as I write.

Also here are Virginia's finest art museum, the state's official zoo, and a botanical garden that comes ablaze with springtime azaleas. After dark, the state's symphony, opera, and stage company add highbrow culture. And if you're a foodie, hot restaurants bring exciting tastes to downtown and the hip residential neighborhood known as Ghent. Interspersed among the modern ingredients are reminders of Norfolk's past, such as historic houses and the old City Hall, now a museum and memorial to World War II hero Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

Indeed, this rising Southern star—dubbed by the local tourist bureau as "The New Norfolk"—is one of the more diverse and fascinating Virginia cities in which to spend a day or two.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

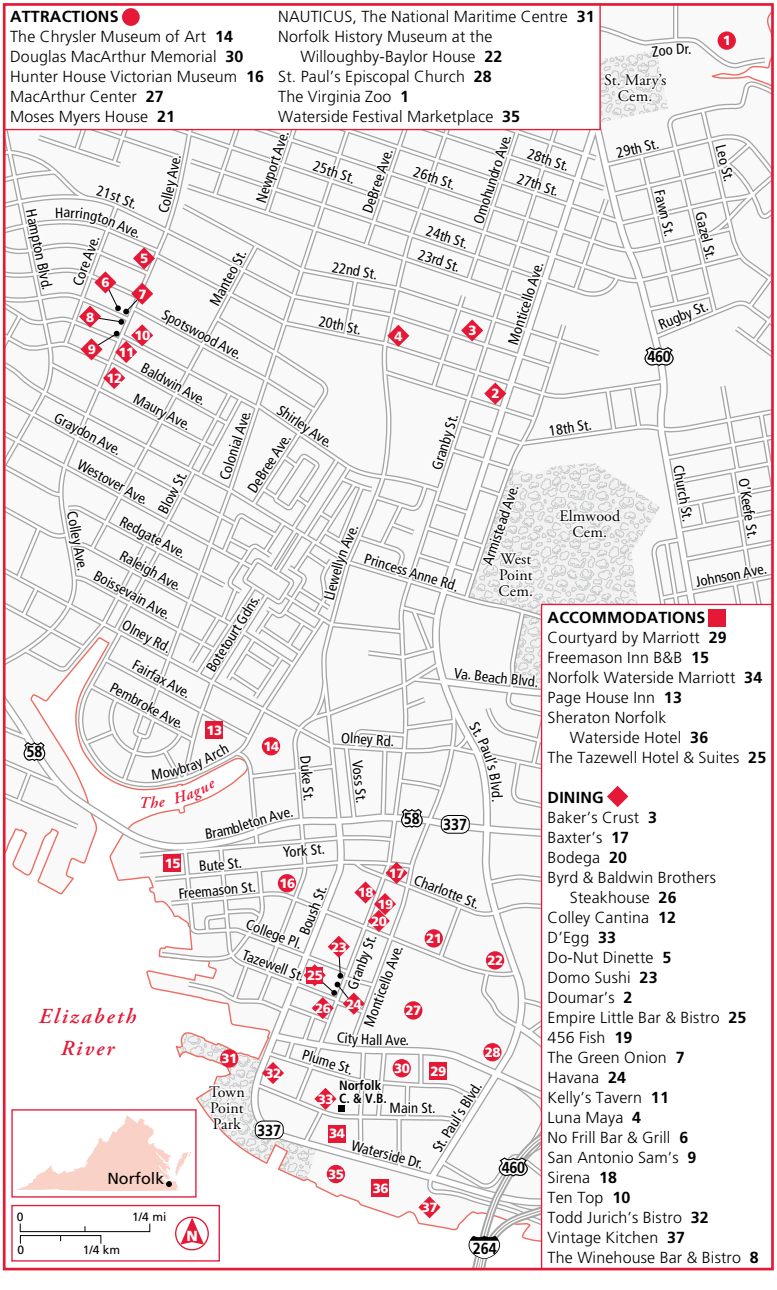
For advance information, contact the **Norfolk Convention & Visitors Bureau,** 232 E. Main St., Norfolk, VA 23510 (✆ **800/368-3097** or 757/441-1852; fax 757/622-3663). The bureau dispenses walking-tour brochures and other information at its offices (Mon–Fri 8:30am–5pm), which are across Main Street from the Norfolk Marriott. There's a small information center at NAUTICUS (p. 292).

Arriving from the west via I-64, there's a **Norfolk Visitor Center** on Fourth View Street at Exit 273 in the Ocean View section (✆ **757/441-1852**). It's open daily 9am to 5pm.

The **Freemason Street Reception Center,** 401 E. Freemason St. (✆ **757/441-1526**), next to the Moses Myers House (p. 291) also has visitor information.

Getting There

BY PLANE **Norfolk International Airport (ORF),** on Norview Avenue 1½ miles north of I-64 (✆ **757/857-3351;** www.norfolkairport.com), is served by American, Continental, Delta, Southwest, United, and US Airways. The major car-rental firms have desks here. Taxis await all flights (see "Getting Around," below), and **Airport Connection–Norfolk** (✆ **866/823-4626** or 757/963-0433; www.onetransportationsolution.com) runs shuttles to points between Williamsburg and Virginia Beach.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24th St.
23rd St.
22nd St.
21st St.
20th St.
18th St.
Rugby St.
Church St.
O'Keefe St.
Johnson Ave.
Elmwood Cem.
West Point Cem.
Newport Ave.
DeBree Ave.
Omohundro Ave.
Montcello Ave.
Granby St.
Amisted Ave.
Shirley Ave.
Colonial Ave.
Llewellyn Ave.
Princess Anne Rd.
Harrington Ave.
Hampton Blvd.
Colley Ave.
Core Ave.
Mantee St.
Spotswood Ave.
Baldwin Ave.
Maury Ave.
Graydon Ave.
Westover Ave.
Blow St.
Redgate Ave.
Raleigh Ave.
Boissevain Ave.
Olney Rd.
Fairfax Ave.
Pembroke Ave.
Botetourt Gdns.
Va. Beach Blvd.
St. Paul's Blvd.
Mowbray Arch
The Hague
Brambleton Ave.
York St.
Bute St.
Freemason St.
Duke St.
Voss St.
Boush St.
College Pl.
Tazewell St.
Charlotte St.
City Hall Ave.
Plume St.
Main St.
Waterside Dr.
Norfolk C. & V.B.
Town Point Park
Elizabeth River
Norfolk
0 1/4 mi
0 1/4 km
58
337
460
264

BY CAR From the west, I-64 runs from Richmond to Norfolk, then swings around the eastern and southern suburbs, where it meets I-664 to form the Hampton Roads Beltway around the area. U.S. 460 also runs the length of Virginia to Norfolk and is a good way to avoid the backups that often plague the bridge-tunnels on I-64 and I-664, especially on summer weekends. U.S. 13 and U.S. 17 also pass through the area. From Virginia Beach, I-264 goes through downtown and Portsmouth.

BY TRAIN & BUS **Amtrak** (✆ **800/872-7245;** www.amtrak.com) trains stop in Newport News, the nearest station. **Greyhound** (✆ **800/231-2222;** www.greyhound.com) has bus service to downtown Norfolk.

CITY LAYOUT Norfolk occupies two peninsulas formed by the Chesapeake Bay and the Elizabeth and Lafayette rivers. **Downtown** is on the southern side of the city, on the north bank of the Elizabeth River. Within walking distance to the northwest, **Freemason** is Norfolk's oldest residential neighborhood, with most of its 18th- and 19th-century town houses restored as private homes, businesses, and restaurants. You'll still find a few cobblestone streets here.

Northwest of Freemason, across a semicircular inlet known as The Hague, **Ghent** was the city's first subdivision and is now its trendiest enclave. Most houses in "old" Ghent, near The Hague and the Chrysler Museum of Art (p. 290), were built between 1892 and 1912. Now thoroughly gentrified, it's home to everyone from well-heeled professionals to writers, artists, and college students. The heart of Ghent's business district runs along **Colley Avenue** between Baldwin Avenue and 21st Street, and along **21st Street** from Colley Avenue east to Granby Street. Here you'll find antiques shops, restaurants, and the artsy NARO Cinema.

Getting Around

A car is the easiest way to get around this spread-out area. **Parking** is available downtown at the MacArthur Center and in municipal garages (the most convenient is on Atlantic Ave. btw. Waterside Dr. and Main St.). The city posts a downtown map showing its parking garages at **www.norfolk.gov/parking**. Visitors to the Douglas MacArthur Memorial (p. 290) can have their tickets validated for 3 hours free parking.

I'm not sure it will help visitors very much, but a light rail system known as **The Tide** (www.ridethetide.com) is scheduled to open in 2010. It will run 7.4 miles between the Eastern Virginia Medical Center (west of downtown at Brambleton Ave. and Hampton Blvd.), and Newtown Road on the city's eastern side. The one-line route takes it through downtown along City Hall Avenue and the MacArthur Center.

I suspect that the free motorized trolleys of **Norfolk Electric Transit** (**NET;** www.norfolk.gov/visitors/net.asp) will remain the easiest way to get around downtown. They operate Monday through Friday 6:30am to 11pm, Saturday noon to midnight, Sunday noon to 8pm. The weekday route runs from Harbor Park across downtown on Main Street and north via Granby Street to Virginia Beach Boulevard and the Harrison Opera House. The weekend route makes a loop around the downtown shopping-and-dining area and then north along Granby Street to Virginia Beach Boulevard. The routes are shown on NET's website and on city maps distributed at the visitor centers (see "Essentials," above).

Hampton Roads Transit (**HRT;** ✆ **757/222-6100;** www.gohrt.com) provides public bus service throughout the region. Although it can take as long as 2 hours each way, the Route 20 bus goes from Monticello Avenue and Charlotte Street to the Virginia Beach oceanfront. Fares are $1.50 for adults, 75¢ for seniors and persons with disabilities, $1

Tips Norfolk's Cannonball & Civil War Trails

Two self-guided walking tours of downtown will take you through 400 years of Norfolk's history. Beginning at the Freemason Street Reception Center, 401 E. Freemason St., sidewalk inlays and medallions mark the route of the **Cannonball Trail** through downtown, along the waterfront, and through the historic Freemason neighborhood. The local version of Virginia's **Civil War Trails** follows much the same route but with an emphasis on Norfolk in 1862. Pick up maps and brochures at the visitor centers.

You will have a guide as you follow the Cannonball Trail with **Segway Tours of Hampton Roads** (✆ **775/412-9734;** www.segwayofhamptonroads.us). The 90-minute tours on the stand-up Segway machines depart daily at 10am, 1pm, and 3pm from Machismos Burrito Bar, 409 York St. They cost $60 per person. Reservations are essential.

for children younger than 19, free for kids shorter than 38 inches tall. Exact change is required.

For taxis, call **Andy's Cab Co.** (✆ **866/840-6573** or 757/622-3232; www.andystaxigroup.com), **Black and White Cabs** (✆ **757/855-4444**), or **Norfolk Checker** (✆ **757/855-3333** www.norfolkcheckertaxi.com).

SEEING THE SIGHTS

Downtown Norfolk's centerpiece is the **MacArthur Center,** a 1-million-square-foot shopping mall covering the 9 square blocks bordered by Monticello and City Hall avenues, Freemason Street, and St. Paul's Boulevard (✆ **757/627-6000;** www.shopmacarthur.com). The main entrance is on Monticello Avenue at Market Street. Anchored by Nordstrom and Dillard's department stores, it has most of the mall regulars, an 18-screen cinema, a food court, and full-service restaurants.

Built in 1983 between Waterside Drive and the Elizabeth River, the **Waterside Festival Marketplace** (✆ **757/627-3300;** www.watersidemarketplace.com), which everyone calls simply the Waterside, was the catalyst for downtown Norfolk's revitalization, like Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Boston's Faneuil Hall, and New York's South Street Seaport. The Elizabeth River Ferry and harbor cruises leave from the dock outside this glass-and-steel pavilion. With so much of its shopping business now going to the MacArthur Center, the Waterside now is primarily a dining and entertainment center.

In **Town Point Park,** to the west of the Waterside, don't miss ***The Homecomer,*** a statue of a returning sailor greeted by his wife and child, and the moving **Armed Forces Memorial,** where bronze letters written home by fallen sailors and marines litter the ground. The park's amphitheater features a full schedule of free events all year—concerts, children's theater, magic shows, puppetry, and more. Beyond the park stand the riverfront's most conspicuous buildings, the huge gray **NAUTICUS, The National Maritime Center** and the glass-enclosed, semicircular **Half Moone Cruise and Celebration Center,** the city's modern cruise-ship terminal (www.cruisenorfolk.org).

East of the Elizabeth River bridges and I-264, **Harbor Park,** a 12,000-seat stadium, is home to the **Norfolk Tides,** a Class AAA International League baseball team affiliated with the Baltimore Orioles (✆ **757/622-2222;** www.norfolktides.com).

Tips Safety in Norfolk

In downtown Norfolk stick to the busy main streets between the MacArthur Center and the Waterside, and don't take unnecessary risks like wandering off into deserted or ill-lit side streets. Volunteer **Public Safety Ambassadors** patrol the streets; they will answer questions about the area, give directions, and escort you back to your car (✆ **757/478-7233**).

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Chrysler Museum of Art ★★★ This imposing Italian Renaissance building on The Hague inlet is Virginia's finest art museum. It is named for Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., who gave a large portion of his collection to the city (see "How Norfolk Became an Art Mecca," box, below). Today it spans artistic periods from ancient Egypt to the present and includes one of the finest and most comprehensive glass collections in the world. Also here is an outstanding collection of Art Nouveau furniture. Other first-floor galleries exhibit ancient Indian, Islamic, Asian, African, and pre-Columbian art. Most second-floor galleries are devoted to painting and sculpture, particularly Italian baroque and French, including works by Monet, Renoir, and Matisse. American art holdings include paintings by Charles Willson Peale, Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley, Thomas Cole, Thomas Hart Benton, Calder, Kline, and Warhol. A permanent gallery is devoted solely to photography. A free audio tour will explain some of the key items as you see them. Allow at least 2 hours here, half a day to do it complete justice.

The museum administers the Moses Myers House and the Norfolk History Museum (see below).

245 W. Olney Rd. ✆ **757/664-6200.** www.chrysler.org. Admission Thurs–Sun $7 adults, $5 seniors and students, free for children 11 and younger; Wed free (donations encouraged). Wed 10am–9pm; Thurs–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. Closed Jan 1, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Douglas MacArthur Memorial ★★ General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's immortal words "I shall return" are engraved on a bronze plaque, along with excerpts from his other speeches, at his final resting place in Norfolk's old city hall, an imposing structure whose dome towers over the side-by-side marble crypts of the general and his wife, Jean. Shown every half-hour in a theater next door, a 25-minute film will give you a perspective on MacArthur's life and help you understand the exhibits. Filled with his corncob pipe, sunglasses, and other personal memorabilia, the chronologically arranged galleries trace U.S. history during MacArthur's life and his role in events up to his ringing "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech to Congress after President Truman fired him during the Korean War. There's a replica of the plaque marking the spot on the USS *Missouri* where MacArthur presided over the surrender of Japan. The memorial will validate your city garage tickets for 3 hours free parking.

MacArthur Sq. (btw. City Hall Ave. and Plume St., at Bank St.). ✆ **757/441-2965.** www.macarthurmemorial.org. Free admission (donations encouraged). Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Hunter House Victorian Museum This redbrick and stone-trimmed Romanesque Revival–style house in the historic Freemason neighborhood was built by prominent banker and merchant James Wilson Hunter in 1894 from plans designed by Boston

architect W. P. Wentworth. Hunter and his wife, Lizzie Barnes Hunter, had three children, none of whom ever married and all of whom spent their entire lives here. They bequeathed the house as a museum of Victorian architecture and decorative arts, the role it plays today. Their original furnishings and decorative arts are still here, along with pieces donated by others. It's a fascinating look at how life was lived in Victorian Norfolk. You must take a tour, which departs on the hour and half-hour.

240 W. Freemason St. ✆ **757/623-9814.** www.hunterhousemuseum.org. Admission $5 adults, $4 seniors, $1 children. Wed–Sat 10am–3:30pm; Sun 12:30–3:30pm. Tours on the hour and half-hour (last tour 3:30pm).

Moses Myers House It has the MacArthur Center looming over its backyard these days, but this handsome early-Federal brick town house was in Norfolk's oldest residential neighborhood when it was built by Moses Myers and his wife, Eliza, who came to Norfolk in 1787. They were the first Jews to settle here, and programs in observance of Jewish holidays are among the museum's annual events. Some 70% of the furniture and decorative arts displayed belonged to the first generation of the family, which lived here until 1930. Two Gilbert Stuart portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Myers hang in the drawing room, which contains some distinctive Empire pieces. The fireplace surround has unusual carvings depicting a sun god—with the features of George Washington. Tours lasting 1 hour and covering both houses depart from the **Freemason Street Reception Center** at 401 E. Freemason St. (✆ **757/441-1526**).

A block away is the **Norfolk History Museum at the Willoughby-Baylor House,** 601 E. Freemason St. (✆ **757/441-1526**), which also is administered by the Chrysler Museum of Art. The Willoughby-Baylor House was built in 1794 by Capt. Thomas Willoughby, whose ancestor, Capt. Thomas Willoughby I, received a royal grant of 200 acres in 1636, of which 50 acres became the city of Norfolk. The museum uses objects from the Chrysler Museum of Art's collections to explain Norfolk's history. Its garden is designed like Colonial gardens at the time it was built.

331 Bank St. ✆ **757/441-1526.** www.chrysler.org/Myers_house.asp. Free admission (donations recommended). Wed–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun noon–4pm. Last tour daily 3pm. Guided 1-hr. tours of both houses depart on the hour. Closed Jan 1, Memorial Day, July 4th, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Fun Facts How Norfolk Became an Art Mecca

Built in 1932 as the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences, the imposing Italian Renaissance building on The Hague inlet was a non-descript city museum until 1971. Then Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., idiosyncratic son of the motor company's founder, brought a large portion of his enormous art collection to Norfolk. Previously he had displayed it in the Chrysler Building in New York City, then in Provincetown, Massachusetts. When his relationship with Provincetown soured, he looked south to Norfolk, hometown of his second wife, Jean Outland Chrysler. At the time his collection was worth about $65 million. Today it's valued at approximately $1 billion. Chrysler, Jr., lived here until his death in 1988, whereupon he bequeathed the collection to the city. Author Peggy Earle tells the fascinating yarn in *Legacy: Walter Chrysler Jr. and the Untold Story of Norfolk's Chrysler Museum of Art* (University of Virginia Press).

NAUTICUS, the National Maritime Centre Kids The large gray waterfront building designed like an artist's rendering of a futuristic battleship is a multifaceted facility dedicated to the U.S. Navy and the sea over which it rules. It's actually three attractions in one. You must pay to enter the third-floor **NAUTICUS,** a very good children's museum with a plethora of movies and hands-on interactive exhibits aimed at families with kids ages 8 to 14. After a morning here, your school-age kids may be ready to enlist.

Admission is free to the second-floor **Hampton Roads Naval Museum** ★ (✆ **757/444-8921;** www.hrnm.navy.mil), in which the U.S. Navy tells the story of its presence here. The exhibit describing the Civil War battle between the ironclads USS *Monitor* and CSS *Merrimac* out on Hampton Roads is worth seeing.

The star of this show, however, is the real battleship **USS *Wisconsin*** ★★★. Berthed alongside on the Elizabeth River, the mighty 888-foot ship was built in 1943 and saw duty in the Pacific during World War II. It was recalled from mothballs to fight in the Korean and Gulf wars. It is once again on inactive reserve status, meaning it can be recalled to duty within 3 months. You cannot go inside, since the innards are hermetically sealed, but you can walk on board and stare up at the enormous 16-inch guns overhanging its teak main deck. It's quite a sight. (There's a spectacular view of the bow framed by a tile archway on Boush St. at the end of Plume St.)

Save a pill for the ***Victory Rover*** cruises to the naval station, which leave from here (see "Harbor Cruises to Where the Ironclads Fought," below). You can buy tickets combining admission to NAUTICUS and a cruise.

1 Waterside Dr. ✆ **800/664-1080** or 757/664-1000. www.nauticus.org. Free admission to 1st deck, naval museum, and battleship; admission to NAUTICUS exhibits and theaters $11 adults, $10 seniors, $8.50 children 4–12, free for children 3 and younger. Combination NAUTICUS/Victory Rover cruise, $24 adults, $17 children 4–12, free for children 3 and younger. Battleship audiotape tour $5 ($3 with NAUTICUS admission). NAUTICUS and Naval Museum Memorial Day to Labor Day daily 10am–5pm; rest of year Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm. Entire complex closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25.

Norfolk Botanical Garden ★★ The grounds of this botanical garden, on Lake Whitehurst about 4 miles northeast of downtown, are brilliantly abloom in April with one of the East Coast's largest display of azaleas—the best time to visit. This quiet beauty can be seen by 25-minute tram tour, by 45-minute pontoon boat tour, or by foot over more than 12 miles of floral pathways. The Statuary Vista is a beautiful setting for Moses Ezekiel's heroic-size statues of great painters and sculptors including Rembrandt, Rubens, Dürer, and da Vinci. Notable, too, are the rose garden, with more than 450 varieties among its 3,000 bushes; a classic Japanese hill-and-pond garden; a fragrance garden; an Italian Renaissance garden; and a WOW Children's Garden. April's Azalea Festival queen is crowned in the Hofheimer Camellia Garden and Renaissance Court. Garden lovers can easily spend half a day here. You can grab a bite at the Azalea Café.

6700 Azalea Garden Rd. (off Norview Ave., near airport). ✆ **757/441-5385.** www.nbgs.org. Admission $7 adults, $6 seniors, $5 children 6–16, free for children 5 and younger. Boat tours $4 adults, $3 children 4–12, free for children 3 and under. Gardens Apr to mid-Oct daily 9am–7pm; mid-Oct to Mar daily 9am–5pm. Tram tours Apr to mid-Oct daily 10am–4pm; mid-Oct to Mar Mon–Fri 1–4pm, Sat–Sun 10am–4pm. Boat tours Apr to mid-Oct Mon–Fri 11:45am–1:45pm, Sat–Sun 11:45am–3:45pm; mid-Oct to Mar Sat–Sun 11:45am–3:45pm. Cafe Mon–Sat 9am–3pm, Sun 10am–4pm. Take I-64 to Exit 279 (Norview/Airport), go east on Norview Ave., turn left on Azalea Garden Rd.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church ★ Although severely damaged when the British shelled Norfolk on January 1, 1776, this lovely brick Anglican church survived and is the only pre-Revolution building left in downtown. A cannonball from one of Lord Dunmore's ships remains lodged in the southwest wall. The main chapel was constructed in

Tips Stop, Look & Listen

Take a few minutes before going on board the USS *Wisconsin* to view the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's multimedia presentation in which seamen reminisce about their experiences aboard the battleship. Then rent a 45-minute audiotape tour. Although docents, many of them veterans of the ship, are on duty to explain what's what, the tape is the best way to see the Goliath. Otherwise, you'll be staring at a lot of gray steel and teak decking.

1739 to serve a parish that had been in existence since about 1636. The tower was added in 1902, and the interior was restored to its Colonial Revival form in 1913. This is a serene respite in the middle of bustling downtown, so take a moment to reflect inside the church, and then examine the ancient tombstones in the shady churchyard, Norfolk's first burial ground. Graves date to the 1600s, although the earliest original stone is from 1748; three others dating from 1673, 1687, and 1681 were brought here.

201 St. Paul's Blvd. ✆ **757/627-4353.** www.saintpaulsnorfolk.com. Free admission (donations suggested). Mon–Fri 9am–5pm. Services Wed noon, Sun 8 and 10:30am.

The Virginia Zoo ★ Kids Your children will be entertained and educated at Virginia's state zoo, on 53 acres adjacent to Norfolk's Lafayette Park and bordered by the Lafayette River. You can take them on a miniature train ride to scope it all out, then on a boardwalk safari and see rhinos, giraffes, and baboons in the noted African plains exhibit (lions are nearby but understandably are not allowed near the grazing animals, their natural prey). Tigers, monkeys, elephants, red pandas, reptiles, and colorful birds also are among the nearly 400 animals here. Be sure to ask in advance about the zoo's behind-the-scenes tours and animal encounters.

3500 Granby St. (at 35th St.). ✆ **757/441-2374.** www.virginiazoo.org. Admission $7 adults, $6 seniors, $5 children 2–11. Train rides $2 per person. Daily 10am–5pm. Train rides every 30 min. daily 10:30am–4:30pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25. From downtown, go north on Monticello Ave., which merges with Granby St., to the zoo on the right.

HARBOR CRUISES TO WHERE THE IRONCLADS FOUGHT

Three cruise boats docked at the Waterside or NAUTICUS offer cruises on the Elizabeth River, Hampton Roads, and the Chesapeake Bay. You will pass the naval base with nuclear subs and aircraft carriers and cross the site of the Civil War battle between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac.*

The best for the money is the 2-hour ***Victory Rover*** (✆ **757/627-7406;** www.navalbasecruises.com) cruise from NAUTICUS to the Norfolk Naval Station—or as close thereto as security will permit. It has summertime trips departing at 11am, 2pm, and 5:30pm, and at least one trip a day (usually departing at 2pm) the rest of the year. Fares are $17 adults, $10 for children. Combination tickets with admission to NAUTICUS cost $24 adults, $17 for children.

From April to October, there are cruises on the ***American Rover*** (✆ **757/627-7245;** www.americanrover.com), a graceful schooner modeled after 19th-century Chesapeake Bay schooners. Prices for the 1½-hour midday cruise and the 2-hour 3pm cruises along the Elizabeth River are $14 and $16 for adults, $8 to $10 for children 11 and younger,

A Ferry Ride to Olde Towne Portsmouth

Across the Elizabeth River from downtown Norfolk, Portsmouth's **Olde Towne** section traces its roots back to 1752. Like those in Charleston and Savannah, its homes present a kaleidoscope of architectural styles: Colonial, Federal, Greek Revival, Georgian, and Victorian. Plaques mounted on imported English street lamps point out their architectural and historical significance.

Ferries were the main means of getting across the river until the 1950s, and the paddlewheel **Elizabeth River Ferry** (✆ **757/222-6100;** www.gohrt.com) still makes the short but picturesque trip. During summer it departs the Waterside marina every 30 minutes Monday to Friday from 7:15am to 11:45pm, weekends from 10:15am to 11:45pm. Off-season service ends at 9:45pm Sunday through Thursday, 11:45pm Friday and Saturday. Fare is $1.50 for adults; 75¢ for children, seniors, and passengers with disabilities (exact change required). There is no ferry service on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

Get off at the second stop, Portsmouth's **North Landing Visitor Center,** on Harbor Court (✆ **800/767-8782** or 757/393-5111; www.visitportsva.com), and pick up a walking tour brochure and map. The center is open daily 9am to 5pm.

Worth seeing are the **Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum,** 2 High St., and the nearby **Lightship Museum** (✆ **757/393-8591** for both; www.portsnavalmuseums.com), in Riverfront Park at the foot of London Boulevard. The Lightship Museum is the lightship *Portsmouth,* built in 1915 and anchored offshore until the 1980s to warn mariners of the dangerous shoals on the approach to Hampton Roads.

Tree-lined High Street, the main drag running inland from the harbor, has several restaurants and coffee shops, including the **Bier Garden** (✆ **757/393-6022**) and **Cafe Europa** (✆ **757/399-6652**).

respectively. It also goes on sunset voyages and adults-only Saturday night party cruises. Call for exact times and reservations.

Also departing from the Waterside, the sleek ***Spirit of Norfolk*** (✆ **866/304-2469** or 757/625-3866; www.spiritofnorfolk.com) is like an oceangoing cruise ship, complete with dancing, good food, and entertainment. Call for prices, schedule and to make reservations.

SHOPPING FOR ANTIQUES ★★

Norfolk is one of the better places in Virginia to search for antiques, with at least 32 shops selling a range of furniture, decorative arts, glassware, jewelry, and other items from both home and overseas. The best place to look is in Ghent, where several shops sit along the 4 blocks of West 21st Street between Granby Street and Colonial Avenue, especially at the corner of Llewellyn Avenue. Granby Street has more than a dozen shops of its own. The visitor centers have a list of the shops.

WHERE TO STAY

Courtyard by Marriott ★ (Value) Compared to its suburban sisters, this breed of city-center Courtyards has a larger lobby with fireplace, a bar open nightly, and a restaurant serving breakfast and dinner but not lunch. The comfortable rooms and suites are typical Courtyard, with big desks, high-speed Internet, and other amenities aimed at business travelers. Unlike the other downtown hotels, here you can open the windows to let in fresh air. This is downtown's best moderately priced hotel.

520 Plume St. (btw. Court St. and St. Paul Blvd.), Norfolk, VA 23510. ✆ **800/321-2211** or 757/963-6000. Fax 757/963-6001. www.courtyard.com. 140 units. $100–$189 double; $289 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $18; no self-parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; free health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Norfolk Waterside Marriott ★★ One of Norfolk's two convention hotels (the Sheraton, below, is the other), and its most elegant, this 24-story high-rise is connected to the Waterside via a covered skywalk. Its mahogany-paneled lobby is a masterpiece of 18th-century European style, with fine paintings, a crystal chandelier, potted palm trees, comfortable seating areas with gleaming lamps, and one-of-a-kind antiques. A magnificent staircase leads to a breakfast-only restaurant, a piano lounge, and meeting rooms on the second floor. There's a branch of Don Shula's 347 Steakhouse and sports bar downstairs off the lobby. Guest rooms are sumptuously furnished with dark-wood pieces. Although the rooms do not have balconies, odd-numbered upper-floor units do have a river view. The indoor pool here opens to a sun deck overlooking the river.

235 E. Main St. (btw. Atlantic St. and Martins Lane), Norfolk, VA 23510. ✆ **800/228-9290** or 757/627-4200. Fax 757/628-6452. www.marriott.com. 405 units. $169–$259 double; $375–$700 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $26; self-parking $19. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; concierge-level rooms; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi ($9.95 per 24 hrs.).

Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel ★★ Next door to the Waterside and overlooking busy Norfolk Harbor, this contemporary 10-story hotel has a more modern ambience than its main competition, the traditionally styled Marriott 2 blocks away. A three-story, light-filled atrium lobby gives way to a restaurant with outdoor seating and a bar with 30-foot windows overlooking the river. About a third of the spacious units facing the river have small balconies (they're allotted on a first-come, first-served basis). Although the Sheraton draws groups and conventions, its location and facilities also make it a good choice for individuals, couples, and families.

777 Waterside Dr., Norfolk, VA 23510. ✆ **800/325-3535** or 757/622-6664. Fax 757/625-8271. www.sheraton.com. 445 units. $89–$169 double; $400–$600 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $22; self-parking $12. Small pets accepted free. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; concierge-level rooms; health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service; Wi-Fi (in public areas). *In room:* A/C, TV, Internet ($10 per 24 hrs.).

The Tazewell Hotel & Suites Built in 1906, this hotel underwent a renovation a few years ago that was intended to restore it to boutique-hotel status. The two-story lobby with floor-to-ceiling paned windows and the brass elevator doors were repaired to their former grand-hotel status, and the rooms were improved, but the project stopped short of luxury status. As is the case with most hotels built back then, some of the rooms are tiny by today's standards. The best feature: It's in the midst of Granby Street's restaurant row.

245 Granby St., Norfolk, VA 23510. ✆ **757/623-6200.** Fax 757/623-6123. www.thetazewell.com. 58 units. $109–$199 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Health club. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units), hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Bed & Breakfasts

Freemason Inn Bed and Breakfast ★ Although this three-story, 1897-vintage Victorian is technically on York Street, the house actually faces Brambleton Avenue in the historic Freemason neighborhood, a few blocks walk to downtown. Tall windows and white walls brighten the entire house during the day, while working gas fireplaces in the antiques-laden guest quarters add coziness at night. Three of the four rooms also have two-person Jacuzzi tubs. Two have king-size beds, including the Wishing Oak Bridal Suite, named for an ancient oak tree under which many a Norfolk knot was tied. A back porch with wicker furniture overlooks a landscaped courtyard. Breakfasts are served in bed if you wish, wine and cheese are put out each evening, and bicycles are available for guests to ride.

411 W. York St. (west of Boutetort St., facing Brambleton Ave.), Norfolk, VA 23510. ✆ **866/388-1897** or 757/963-7000. Fax 757/233-1897. www.freemasoninn.com. 4 units. $145–$245 double. Rates include full breakfast. Honeymoon and other packages available. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Bikes; room service (breakfast only). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Page House Inn ★ Across the street from the Chrysler Museum of Art in the Ghent district, this grand three-story brick Colonial Revival mansion with an expansive veranda was built in 1899. You will find a plethora of golden oak here—paneling, sliding doors, and moldings, plus a hand-carved fireplace in the living room and a soaring staircase ascending to the rooms upstairs. In the basement, a billiards room boasts a big-screen TV. Guest quarters are beautifully furnished with four-poster beds and one-of-a-kind antiques. Five units have gas-log fireplaces. The grandest also sports a sunken hot tub and a walk-in steam room/shower big enough for two. Gourmet breakfasts are served in your room if you like. Your small pooch is welcome here.

323 Fairfax Ave. (at Mowbray Arch), Norfolk, VA 23507. ✆ **800/599-7659** or 757/625-5033. Fax 757/623-9451. www.pagehouseinn.com. 7 units. $150–$230 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. Free parking. Small dogs accepted ($25 fee). **Amenities:** Bikes; health club; room service (breakfast only). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

Downtown

The downtown renaissance has turned **Granby Street** from Main to Charlotte streets into Norfolk's Restaurant Row, as hip new dining rooms open all the time (and a few disappear). Here you'll find a wide range of restaurants and pubs.

The swanky **Byrd & Baldwin Brothers Steakhouse,** 116 Brooke Ave. (✆ 757/222-9191), in a restored 1906 building half a block west of Granby Street, has the best steaks. **Bodega,** 422 Granby St. (✆ 757/622-8577), serves tapas along with the street's best Spanish and Italian fare. The fast-paced **Empire Little Bar & Bistro,** 245 Granby St. (✆ 757/626-3100), specializes in tapas and is open daily until 2am. **Domo Sushi,** 273 Granby St. (✆ 757/628-8282), serves just that, plus other Japanese offerings. **Havana,** 255 Granby St. (✆ 757/627-5800), serves Cuban-influenced fare. **Sirena,** 455 Granby St. (✆ 757/623-6622), is tops for Italian fare.

To catch the games and woof a burger, head to **Baxter's,** 500 Granby St. (✆ **757/622-9837**), a monstrous sports bar with pool tables and good pub fare (daily 11am–2am, Baxter's cures my late-night hunger pangs).

The MacArthur Center, on Monticello Avenue at Market Street, has a very good and inexpensive **food court** up on the third floor.

Tips Dining & Picnicking Beside the River

I seldom patronize the food court in the Waterside Festival Marketplace, but I do occasionally have lunch at its branches of **Hooters** (✆ **757/622-9464**) and **Joe's Crab Shack** (✆ **757/625-0655**), as they are the only Norfolk restaurants with outdoor tables overlooking the Elizabeth River.

The benches in the Town Park are ideal for a riverside picnic. The fixin's are available at the **Market at Harbor Heights,** 260 Boush St. (✆ **757/213-7396**), at Tazewell Street, a monstrous supermarket on the ground floor of a towering condo building. It has a wine and cheese department, a bakery, and a deli with ready-made sandwiches and salads.

My favorite downtown breakfast spot is **D'Egg,** 404 E. Main St. (✆ **757/626-3447**), opposite the Norfolk Marriott, an inexpensive diner serving eggs, waffles, pancakes, and other traditional day-starters. It's open daily from 7am to 3pm. (For you Starbucks addicts, there's a branch next door to D'Egg.)

456 Fish ★★ Value AMERICAN This casual but sophisticated restaurant is tops on the Granby Street strip for fish. I would start with fried green tomatoes with a lobster remoulade, then select from pan-seared salmon, crab-stuffed tilapia, seared rare tuna coated with sesame, or macadamia-crusted mahi-mahi. Also check the daily specials, which usually are the freshest fish available.

456 Granby St. ✆ **757/625-4444.** www.456fish.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $12–$34. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 5–10pm; Fri–Sat 5–11pm; Sun 11am–3pm and 5–10pm.

Todd Jurich's Bistro ★★★ AMERICAN Executive chef Todd Jurich's urbane bistro is one of the finest restaurants in Hampton Roads. You'll see why when you partake of Todd's creative twists on Southern traditions, such as his all-lump-meat crab cakes—a far cry, indeed, from the fried cakes dispensed at many Chesapeake Bay seafood shacks. Todd uses only fresh produce, drawn whenever possible from local farms. For lunch, you can choose from salads, sandwiches, or smaller portions of the dinner mains. Vintages from the award-winning wine list go on sale during cocktail hour (4:30–6:30pm) at the wine bar.

150 Main St. (entry on Boush St., opposite NAUTICUS). ✆ **757/622-3210.** www.toddjurichsbistro.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $19–$29. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2pm and 5:30–10pm; Sat 5:30–10pm.

Vintage Kitchen ★★★ AMERICAN Todd Jurich had a monopoly on fine downtown dining until French-trained chef Phillip Craig Thomason, a Portsmouth native, opened this restaurant on the ground level of Dominion Tower, a skyscraper office building between Waterside Drive and the Elizabeth River. His is the only really good downtown restaurant with a river view, which almost alone makes it a fine choice. Like his teachers in Paris, Chef Thomason uses fresh-from-the-farm ingredients. These show up first in his exquisite pumpkin soup with cinnamon croutons and his spicy Caesar salad. From there I would pay attention to the specials, which always feature a fresh fish of the day. Weekday lunches offer the best burgers in Hampton Roads. Vegetarians will always find something tasty here. Unlike most Virginia restaurants, this one actually specializes in Virginia wines.

999 Waterside Dr., in Dominion Towers. ✆ **757/625-3370.** www.vintage-kitchen.com. Main courses $12–$34. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Wed 11am–3pm; Thurs–Fri 11am–3pm and 6–10pm; Sat 6–10pm.

In Ghent

The heart of Ghent lies along Colley Avenue between Maury and Harrison avenues, flanking the artsy Naro Theatre. I love to stroll these short blocks and take in the busy scene, especially on warm weekend evenings when the restaurants are busy and their sidewalk tables are packed. In addition to No Frill Bar and Grill and The Green Onion (below), several good restaurants satisfy a variety of tastes.

Best of the lot is **The Winehouse Bar & Bistro** (✆ 757/622-7777), which serves an international menu and has live music some evenings (Monday is jazz night). **San Antonio Sam's** (✆ 757/623-0233) and **Colley Cantina** (✆ 757/622-0033) both serve Tex-Mex, while **Kelly's Tavern** (✆ 757/623-3216) dishes up reasonably good pub fare. Vegetarians and vegans will be at home at **Ten Top** (✆ 757/622-5422), in a three-store shopping center on Shirley Avenue east of Colley Avenue. Best place for a cooked breakfast is the **Do-Nut Dinette** (✆ 757/625-0061).

It's not on Colley Avenue, but the neighborhood branch of **Baker's Crust,** 330 W. 21st St. (✆ **757/625-3600**), in the Palace Shops between Llewellyn and DeBree streets, is both the best place in town for breakfast and one of the better values for lunch and dinner. The bakery provides fresh pastries to start your day and bread for a variety of sandwiches at lunch and dinner.

The Green Onion INTERNATIONAL This bistro-style storefront restaurant with a display kitchen in the rear isn't the fanciest place to dine, but the chef mixes flavors in exciting combinations, such as sautéed scallops finished with a sweet corn and snow pea sauce. Meat lovers can opt for steaks, and vegetarians always have choices here. There are a few tables out front on the sidewalk.

1603 Colley Ave. (btw. Spotswood Ave. and 21st St.). ✆ **757/963-6100.** Reservations recommended. Main courses $16–$33. AE, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 11am–3pm and 5–10pm; Sat 5–11pm; Sun 11am–3pm and 5–9pm.

Luna Maya ★ Value LATIN AMERICAN/VEGETARIAN This little creation of Bolivian-born sisters Karla and Vivian Montano brings the delightful flavors of Latin America to the 21st Street shopping area. Although burritos and tamales outnumber dishes from Bolivia and Argentina, this is no refried-beans joint. Try a shrimp or chorizo burrito, and you'll see what I mean. Vegetarians and vegans get at least four choices here daily. You won't get linens and silver, but the food is interesting and very good.

2000 Colonial Ave. (at 21st St. in Corner Shops). ✆ **757/622-6986.** www.lunamayarestaurant.com. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $11–$18. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 5:30–9:30pm.

No Frill Bar & Grill ★ AMERICAN Don't expect romance at this always-busy neighborhood favorite. Families as well as couples will find something appealing on the extensive menu of large salads (with or without meat or fish), pita wraps, sandwiches, burgers, and "platters" ranging from home-style meatloaf to Low Country shrimp and grits. I found the nightly specials appealing and opted for a huge salad with fried scallops, country ham, jalapeño poppers, and numerous vegetables, all topped with toasted almonds and a red wine vinaigrette. Each bite presented distinct flavors depending on what came up on my fork. I went away full and quite pleased.

806 Spotswood Ave. ✆ **757/627-4262.** www.nofrillgrill.com. Sandwiches and burgers $7–$12; main courses $12–$19. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10pm, Fri–Sat 11am–11pm, Sun 10am–10pm.

Fun Facts Cones & Carhops

Some of the wafflelike ice-cream cones made at **Doumar's,** an old-fashioned drive-in with carhops and curb service at 19th Street and Monticello Avenue (✆ **757/627-4163;** www.doumars.com), come from the original cone-making machine invented by Abe Doumar at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. Abe's descendants keep his invention oiled and working, and descendants of his North Carolina–style barbecue sandwiches (a steal at $2.50 apiece), burgers, hot dogs, sundaes, and milkshakes round out the extremely inexpensive menu. Doumar's has been around since the 1930s, which makes it a hip historical attraction. Open Monday through Thursday 8am to 11pm, Friday and Saturday 8am to 12:30am.

NORFOLK AFTER DARK

For a rundown on events, pick up a copy of ***Veer Magazine*** (www.veermag.com), a weekly paper free at the visitor information offices, most hotel lobbies, and the Waterside. The "Daily Break" section in the local rag, ***The Virginian-Pilot*** (www.pilotonline.com), is also a good source.

The Performing Arts

From opera to riverside rock concerts, Norfolk has a wider array of performing arts than any city in the state, and the choices keep growing.

If your brow is high, the **Virginia Stage Company** (✆ **757/627-1234;** www.vastage.com) puts on dramas and musicals from October through April in the **Wells Theatre,** 110 Tazewell St. (✆ **757/627-6988**), at Monticello Avenue opposite the MacArthur Center. Built in 1913, this restored Beaux Arts gem is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The **Virginia Symphony** (✆ **757/892-6366;** www.virginiasymphony.org) often plays at **Chrysler Hall,** Charlotte Street and St. Paul's Boulevard, and the **Virginia Opera** (www.vaopera.org) sings at the **Harrison Opera House,** 160 E. Virginia Beach Blvd. at Llewellyn Avenue (✆ **757/623-1223**).

Chrysler Hall and the Harrison Opera House are part of the **Norfolk SCOPE** complex (✆ **757/664-6464;** www.sevenvenues.com), which also includes the futuristic **Norfolk SCOPE Arena,** Brambleton Avenue and St. Paul's Boulevard, which seats 12,000 for the circus, ice shows, sports, concerts, and other events.

Norfolk SCOPE also manages the restored **Attucks Theatre,** on Church Street at Virginia Beach Boulevard (✆ **757/664-6464;** www.attucks theatre.org), which was built by African-American entrepreneurs in 1919 and named for Crispus Attucks, a black man who was the first American patriot to die in the Revolutionary War. Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and many other famous musicians performed here from the 1920s through the early 1950s, when it was among a row of nightclubs, restaurants, and stores on Church Street that comprised one of the liveliest African-American neighborhoods in the segregated South. Today you might hear the Preservation Hall Jazz Band or Jerry "The Iceman" Butler.

Town Park, between the Waterside and NAUTICUS on the Elizabeth River, is the scene of constant outdoor entertainment during the warm months, most sponsored by **Norfolk Festevents** (✆ **757/441-2345;** www.festeventsva.org). These include Friday

Tips The Best Time to Be Entertained

The best time to be entertained in Norfolk—or anywhere in Hampton Roads, for that matter—is during the **Virginia Arts Festival** (www.virginiaartsfest.com) from mid-April through mid-May. That's when the likes of Itzhak Perlman, the Martha Graham Dance Company, and the Tokyo String Quartet appear at venues from Williamsburg to Virginia Beach. Call ✆ **877/741-2787** or 757/282-2800 for information, 757/671-8100 for tickets. Adding to the fun, the arts festival coincides with Norfolk's International Azalea Festival.

night concerts, the annual Norfolk Harborfest in June, Cingular Norfolk Jazz Festival in July, and the Cingular Town Point Virginia Wine Festival in October.

The Bar & Club Scene

Most grownup club action these days is found along Granby Street between Main and Charlotte streets, where some of the many restaurants and bars have live music (see "Where to Dine," above). Take a stroll any night, especially on weekends, and you're bound to hear tunes to your liking. Check out **Scotty Quixx,** 436 Granby St. (✆ **757/625-0008**), and **Hell's Kitchen,** 124 Granby St. (✆ **757/624-1906**). Because the scene changes significantly from night to night depending on which bands are playing where, pick up a copy of the local alternative newspaper, *Veer Magazine* (www.veermag.com), which will give a good rundown of what's going on when you're here.

A block to the east, opposite the MacArthur Center, the **Norva Theater,** 317 Monticello Ave. (✆ **757/627-4547;** www.thenorva.com), hosts rock, reggae, and other bands. With lounges overlooking the stage from three levels, it's more a big club than a theater these days.

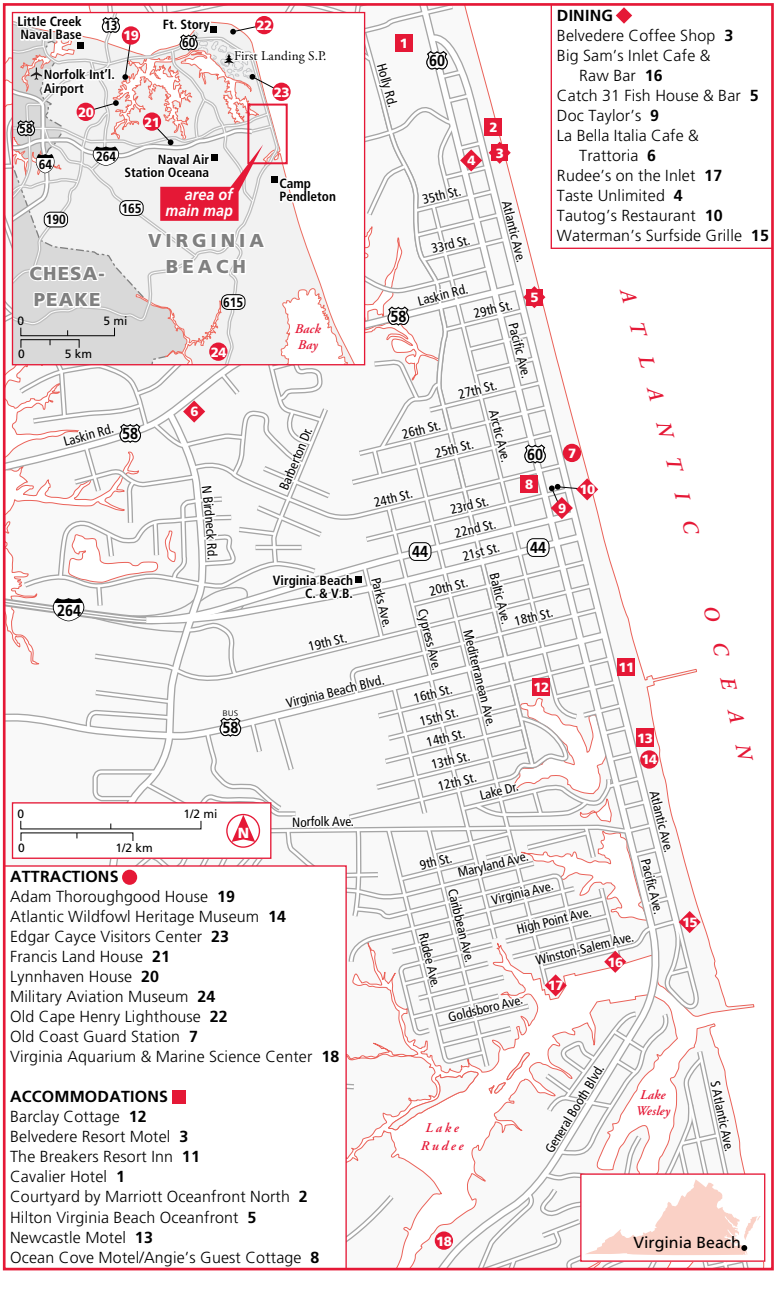
Once the center of Norfolk nightlife, the **Waterside Festival Marketplace** (see "Seeing the Sights," earlier in this chapter) attracts a mostly young after-dark crowd these days. Here you'll find **Jillian's** (✆ **757/624-9100**), a noisy emporium with a restaurant, sports bar, billiards and electronic games, and a dance club with music to thrill the soul of any 18-year-old. I like to stroll through the Waterside to see what's going on, and then head over to Granby Street.

2 VIRGINIA BEACH ★

20 miles E of Norfolk; 110 miles SE of Richmond; 207 miles S of Washington, D.C.

Just as downtown Norfolk gave itself a major face-lift, so has Virginia Beach done a bit of cosmetic surgery. The city's 20 miles of unbroken sand and surf have always lured families from throughout the region to take their annual beach vacations here. Traditionally the beach took on a certain "Redneck Riviera" flavor from Memorial Day to Labor Day. But that image is changing as new hotels and surfside parks add luster to the oceanfront area.

The actual city of Virginia Beach covers a huge geographic area between the Chesapeake Bay and the North Carolina line. There's no downtown; instead, it's like one giant suburb from Norfolk to the Atlantic Ocean. The largest commercial district is known as



DINING
Belvedere Coffee Shop **3**
Big Sam's Inlet Cafe & Raw Bar **16**
Catch 31 Fish House & Bar **5**
Doc Taylor's **9**
La Bella Italia Cafe & Trattoria **6**
Rudee's on the Inlet **17**
Taste Unlimited **4**
Tautog's Restaurant **10**
Waterman's Surfside Grille **15**

ATTRACTIONS
Adam Thoroughgood House **19**
Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum **14**
Edgar Cayce Visitors Center **23**
Francis Land House **21**
Lynnhaven House **20**
Military Aviation Museum **24**
Old Cape Henry Lighthouse **22**
Old Coast Guard Station **7**
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center **18**

ACCOMMODATIONS
Barclay Cottage **12**
Belvedere Resort Motel **3**
The Breakers Resort Inn **11**
Cavalier Hotel **1**
Courtyard by Marriott Oceanfront North **2**
Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront **5**
Newcastle Motel **13**
Ocean Cove Motel/Angie's Guest Cottage **8**

Pembroke, off I-64 at the intersection of Independence and Virginia Beach boulevards, where the new **Town Center of Virginia Beach** houses national restaurants and retailers.

You can forget all that sprawl if you're here on vacation, for the fun is at the **Oceanfront,** the prime resort area where you will find a solid line of big hotels, restaurants, beachwear and souvenir shops, and video-game arcades. Although resorts line the beachfront and obscure ocean views from everywhere except their own rooms, the 59-block-long Boardwalk (it's actually concrete) boasts immaculate landscaping, wood benches, small parks, a bike-skating path, public restrooms, and attractive white Colonial-style street lamps. And during the summer, the Boardwalk hosts free live entertainment most evenings.

There is more to do in Virginia Beach than lying on the sand, swimming, kayaking, fishing, and chasing dolphins offshore. Nature lovers can drive a few miles south to the **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge,** which attracts migrating birds and protects several miles of beach and marshlands from development, and then walk or take a tram to the deserted beaches of **False Cape State Park** down by the North Carolina border. Here also is the **Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center,** the most popular museum in the state and a terrific place to take the kids even if it isn't raining. History lovers will find several sites of interest, including the **First Landing Cross,** where the Jamestown settlers planted their own cross on April 26, 1607.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

For information on planning your trip or assistance while you're here, contact the **Visitor Information Center,** 2100 Parks Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23451 (✆ **800/822-3224;** www.vbfun.com). A large board has phones connected to the reservations desks of major hotels and resorts. Particularly helpful are the center's annual "Vacation Guide" and a free **map** showing public restrooms and municipal parking lots in the resort area. The center is at the eastern end of I-264. It's open daily from 9am to 5pm, to 7pm from mid-June through Labor Day weekend.

A satellite office is in First Landing State Park's **Chesapeake Bay Center,** 2500 Shore Dr. (U.S. 60; ✆ **757/412-2316**). It's open daily from 9am to 5pm.

There are **information kiosks** at the beach on Atlantic Avenue at 17th and 24th streets during June, July, and August. ***Note:*** These are the only official visitor information booths at the beach; most others with "tourist information" signs are come-ons for the many timeshare sales operations here.

Racks at the visitor information center and elsewhere contain several slick give-away tourist publications packed with information and money-saving coupons.

Getting There

BY PLANE Virginia Beach is served by **Norfolk International Airport (ORF),** about 15 miles west of the oceanfront resort area (see "Essentials" in section 1).

BY CAR Follow I-64 to I-264 East. I-264 ends near the heart of the oceanfront resort area. Also from the west, U.S. 60 becomes the scenic Shore Drive, which dead-ends at Pacific Avenue on the northern end of the ocean beach; a right turn takes you along this main north-south drag through the resort area. From the north or south, U.S. 13 and 17 will take you to I-64.

City Layout

The **Boardwalk** and its adjacent bike/skating path run along the beach from 1st Street at Rudee Inlet north to 39th Street. Behind the beachfront hotels, **Atlantic Avenue** takes you north-south from Rudee Inlet all the way north to Cape Henry. A block inland, the four-lane **Pacific Avenue** goes from the inlet north to 42nd Street (it's a much speedier way through the resort area than Atlantic Ave.).

To the north, Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean meet at Cape Henry, home to **Cape Henry Lighthouse, Fort Story,** and the **First Landing State Park.**

At Rudee Inlet, Pacific Avenue gives way to **General Booth Boulevard,** which takes you southwest past the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center some 12 miles south to **Sandbridge,** an oceanfront enclave of cottages and two ghastly condo developments. Sandbridge is aptly named, for it constitutes a "sand bridge" connecting the Virginia mainland to North Carolina's magnificent Outer Banks chain of barrier islands, which stretch for hundreds of miles to the south of here. To the east is the Atlantic Ocean. To the west, a maze of "back bay" marshes and waterways makes this a natural jewel comparable to Assateague Island on the Eastern Shore (see section 3). You can't drive from Sandbridge to the Outer Banks because of **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge** and **False Cape State Park,** which protect the Peninsula and offer undisturbed beach and marshland for hikers, bikers, bird-watchers, and sun worshipers.

Getting Around

Between mid-June and Labor Day, especially on weekends, on-street parking spaces near the beach can be as scarce as hen's teeth, and you are limited to 3 hours even if you can find one. Try the **municipal parking garages** on Atlantic Avenue at 3rd, 9th, 19th, and 26th streets or a few private pay lots along Pacific Avenue (the visitor information center has free maps that show them).

I usually leave my car at my hotel and get around on a bus system known as **VB Wave** (www.vbwave.com). Route 30 runs from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, about every 20 minutes from 8am to 2am along Atlantic Avenue between Rudee Inlet and 42nd Street. You can transfer at 40th Street to the regular Route 33 bus for First Landing State Park and other points to the north.

Also during summer, the **Aquarium & Campground Shuttle** (Rte. 31) runs daily, about every 20 minutes from 8am to 2am between Atlantic Avenue at 40th Street and the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center on General Booth Boulevard. And the **Shoppers Express** (Rte. 32) goes from Atlantic Avenue to Laskin Road past the Hilltop Shopping Center to Lynnhaven Mall.

Fare on any VB Wave Trolley is $2 for adults, 50¢ for seniors and persons with disabilities, free for children shorter than 38 inches tall. It may be more economical to buy a 1-day **GO Shuttle** pass ($2 per adult), which permits unlimited rides. Buy them at the automated blue-and-yellow dispensing machines at the trolley stops or at the transit kiosk on Atlantic Avenue at 24th Street.

The trolleys are operated by **Hampton Roads Transit** (**HRT; ✆ 757/222-6100;** www.gohrt.com), which also provides public bus service in the region. HRT's **oceanfront terminal** is on Pacific Avenue between 19th and 20th streets. From there, the Route 20 bus goes to downtown Norfolk (it takes up to 2 hr. each way). Regular bus fares are $1.50 for adults, $1 for children younger than 19, free for kids shorter than 38 inches tall. Exact change is required.

For a taxi, call **Andy's Cab Co.** (**✆ 757/495-3300**).

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Virginia Beach offers a wonderful variety of watersports, starting, of course, with its fine-sand beach for swimming. But note that between Memorial Day and Labor Day, no ball playing, fishing, or other sports are allowed on the beach between 2nd Street and 42nd Street from 10am to 5pm.

BIKING, JOGGING & SKATING You can walk, jog, or run on the Boardwalk, or bike and skate on its adjoining bike path. There are biking and hiking trails in **First Landing State Park** (which rents bikes) and in **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge** (see "Parks & Wildlife Refuges," below).

You can rent wheels from early March to October from **Cherie's Bicycle & Blade Rental** (✆ **757/437-8888**) and **Bonnie's Beach Bikes** (✆ **757/460-9051**), which have stations every couple of blocks along the Boardwalk. Rentals start at $6 an hour, $59 a week.

FISHING Deep-sea fishing aboard a party boat can be an exciting day's entertainment for novices and dedicated fishermen alike. Headquarters for both party and private charter boats is the **Virginia Beach Fishing Center,** 200 Winston-Salem Ave. (✆ **757/422-5700;** www.virginiafishing.com), on Rudee Inlet. Make reservations at the center at least a day in advance.

You can also drop a line from the **Virginia Beach Fishing Pier,** between 14th and 15th streets, oceanfront (✆ **757/428-2333**), open April through October. It has bait for sale and rods for rent. On the Chesapeake Bay, **Lynnhaven Inlet Fishing Pier,** Starfish Road off Shore Drive (✆ **757/481-7071**), open 24 hours a day in summer, rents rods and reels and sells crab cages.

GOLF Next to Williamsburg, Virginia Beach offers more golf holes per capita than any other Virginia destination. Sand, water, and wind make up for the area's flat terrain to provide plenty of challenges at the **Virginia Beach National Golf Club** (✆ **877/484-3872** or 757/563-9440; www.vbnational.com), designed by Pete Dye and Curtis Strange and formerly known as the Tournament Players Club of Virginia Beach.

Elevated tees and strategically placed water and bunkers pose problems at **Heron Ridge Golf Club** (✆ **757/426-3800;** www.heronridge.com), designed by Fred Couples and Gene Bates. Sharp fairway angles at the Rees Jones-designed **Hell's Point Golf Course** (✆ **757/721-3400;** www.hellspoint.com) have been described as both "devilish" and "Satanic." Another Rees Jones project, **Honey Bee Golf Course** (✆ **757/471-2768**) is shorter (par 70) but presents challenges for beginners and experts alike. The city has several public links, including **Red Wing Lake Municipal Golf Course** (✆ **757/437-4845;** www.vbgov.com/dept/parks).

Call the courses for greens fees, tee times, and directions.

KAYAKING Even if you've never settled your stern into a kayak, you're sure to enjoy a paddling excursion in this area's quiet backwaters or a dolphin-watching adventure on the high seas. As the popularity of kayaking has increased, so has the number of operators here. The local convention and visitor bureau (see "Essentials," above) publishes a "Virginia Beach Adventure Getaways" brochure listing all of them and some hotels that have outdoor packages.

Kayak Nature Tours (✆ **888/669-8368** or 757/480-1999; www.tidewateradventures.com) has been around the longest and is still one of the best. It has 2½-hour dolphin-watching trips from May through October. The guides also lead tours of the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and to other nearby locations. Tour prices range from $50 to

Tips Good Golf Packages

You don't have to be Tiger Woods to take advantage of golf packages organized by **Virginia Beach Golf Getaways** (✆ **866/482-4653;** www.vbgolf.com). Check the website or ask the visitor center for a copy of its annual golf guide.

$110, with a 25% discount for children accompanied by an adult. Reservations are required.

If Kayak Adventures doesn't have space, contact **Wild River Outfitters** (✆ **877/431-8566** or 757/431-8566; www.wildriveroutfitters.com), **Back Bay Getaways** (✆ **757/721-4484;** www.backbaygetaways.com), or **Ocean Rentals Ltd.** (✆ **800/695-4212** or 757/721-6210; www.oceanrentalsltd.com). The latter two are in Sandbridge and specialize in touring the nearby Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

SCUBA DIVING The Atlantic Ocean off Virginia Beach is colder and less clear than it is below Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, but that's not to say you can't dive here. **Lynnhaven Dive Center** (✆ **757/481-7949;** www.ldcscuba.com) sends its two dive boats out to more than 20 nearby wrecks and other sites year-round, and it has trips to warmer waters in North Carolina. It also teaches diving and rents equipment.

SURFING Unlike the huge breakers on the north shore of Oahu, the waves here usually are gentle enough during summer for novices to learn to stay up on a surfboard—and probably not break a leg in the process (don't sue me if you do!). If you've never been on a board and would like to test your balance, take a 2-hour lesson from **Ocean Rentals Ltd.** (✆ **800/695-4212** or 757/721-6210; www.oceanrentalsltd.com) in Sandbridge for $45 per person. Reservations are required.

SWIMMING During the summer season, lifeguards are on duty along the resort strip from 2nd to 42nd streets; they also handle raft, umbrella, and beach-chair rentals. Despite their presence, you should always be careful when swimming in the surf, particularly if a northeast wind is kicking up a dangerous undertow. When in doubt, ask the lifeguard.

You can get away from the summer crowds—and the lifeguards—by driving 12 miles south of Rudee Inlet to **Little Island City Park,** in the residential beach area of Sandbridge. To really escape the crowds, take the tram from there to **False Cape State Park** (see "Parks & Wildlife Refuges," below).

WAVE RUNNING & PARASAILING You can go parasailing and rent exciting WaveRunners from **Rudee Inlet Jet Ski Rentals** next to the Virginia Beach Fishing Center at Rudee Inlet (✆ **757/428-4614;** www.beachparasail.com).

PARKS & WILDLIFE REFUGES

One of the best things about Virginia Beach is that you don't have to go far from the busy resort to find open spaces for hiking, biking, camping, and bird-watching.

Back Bay & False Cape ★★★

Especially inviting for bird-watchers, canoeists, and kayakers is **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge,** in the southeastern corner of Virginia near the North Carolina line. Actually on the northern end of North Carolina's Outer Banks, its 9,200 acres of beaches, dunes, marshes, and backwaters are typical of the barrier island environment. It also is

on the main Atlantic Flyway for migratory birds, and a wide range of wildlife lives here all year. No swimming, surfing, or sunbathing is allowed on the pristine beach, but you can collect shells, surf-cast for fish, and bird-watch. There are also nature trails and a canoe launching spot with marked trails through the marshes. Daily admission April through October is $5 per vehicle, $2 per pedestrian or biker; it's free November through March. The refuge is open daily from sunup to sundown all year. The **visitor contact station** (✆ **757/721-2412**) is open Monday through Friday 8am to 4pm, weekends 9am to 4pm. It offers nature and environmental education programs by reservation only. Note that pets are permitted, on leashes, October through March only. From Rudee Inlet, go south on General Booth Boulevard and follow the signs 12 miles to Sandbridge and the refuge. For more information, contact the Refuge Manager, 4005 Sandpiper Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23456 (✆ **757/721-2412;** www.fws.gov/backbay).

The kayak outfitters mentioned under "Outdoor Activities," above, will take you paddling in the refuge.

Swimming and sunbathing are permitted on the beach in **False Cape State Park,** 4 miles south of the Back Bay visitor contact station via a hiking and biking trail. You'll find 6 miles of beachfront (to the North Carolina line), an interpretive trail, and more than 3 miles of hiking trails. Primitive camping is by permit only, which you can get by calling ✆ **800/933-7275.** The park has no other visitor facilities, so bring everything you will need, including drinking water. It's open daily sunrise to sunset.

You can't park in the national wildlife refuge lot while visiting False Cape State Park, so leave your vehicle at Little Island City Park in Sandbridge. From there, you can either hike or bike the 6 miles to False Cape or take the refuge's **Blue Goose Tram** that runs daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends, Friday through Sunday in April, May, September, and October. It departs at 9am and returns at 1pm and stops for about 2 hours at the False Cape. It's first-come, first-served, but call ✆ **757/721-1412** to make sure it's running. Fares are $8 adults, $6 seniors and children under 12.

For more information, contact the park at 4001 Sandpiper Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23456 (✆ **757/426-7128;** www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/falscape.htm).

First Landing State Park ★★

The Virginia Company, which went on to settle Jamestown, made its first landing in the New World on April 16, 1607, in what is now this fine state park, whose 2,888 preserved acres run between the Lynnhaven River and the Chesapeake Bay to within 2 blocks of the oceanfront. Rabbits, squirrels, and raccoons are among the many species in this urban park, which boasts 19 miles of hiking trails. The main entrance is on Shore Drive (U.S. 60), where the visitor information center is open daily 9am to 5pm. The grounds and trails are open daily 8am to sunset. The 64th Street entry, off Atlantic Avenue, leads to a quiet-water beach on Broad Bay. Admission to the park during summer is $3 per vehicle on weekdays, $4 on weekends. Bikes are prohibited except on the gravel, 6-mile Cape Henry Trail, which runs between the 64th Street entrance and the trail center.

There are 20 two-bedroom cabins that can be rented here. Rates vary by season, and bookings are essential, so call the state park reservations center (✆ **800/933-7275**). Open from March through November, a bayside campground in a wooded area beside a fine beach has 222 sites for tents and RVs for $22 to $28 a night plus tax. The park store (✆ **757/412-2302**) rents bicycles and beach equipment and supplies.

For more information, contact the park at 2500 Shore Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23451 (✆ **757/412-2320;** www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/1stland.htm).

Next to the campground, the **Chesapeake Bay Center** (✆ **727/412-2316**) has an exhibit about the Jamestown settlers' landing here in 1607. It also shows a short video and has an exhibit about the local ecology, both put together by the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center; it's interesting but not as good as the main museum (p. 309). There's a visitor information desk here. A beachside amphitheater hosts concerts during the summer (call for a schedule). The center is open daily 9am to 5pm.

Segway Tours of Hampton Roads (✆ **757/412-9734;** www.segwayofhamptonroads.us) will guide you through the park on its two-wheel machines for $60 per person. The tours depart at 10am, 1pm, and 3pm daily during summer. Call for reservations, which are essential.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum ★★ This small but excellent museum displays a collection of carved decoys—some of them more than a century old—and decorative wildlife, plus paintings of ducks, geese, and other wildfowl. It occupies the white-brick-and-clapboard DeWitt beach cottage built in 1895 by Virginia Beach's first mayor. The oldest structure on the waterfront, the cottage alone is worth a stop as you stroll along the Boardwalk. It's operated by the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild, which applies the donations and profits from the gift shop (which carries excellent decoys) to its conservation efforts.

1113 Atlantic Ave. (at 12th St.). ✆ **757/437-8432.** www.awhm.org. Free admission (donations encouraged). Summer Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm; off season Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Easter, Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Dec 31.

Edgar Cayce Visitors Center You don't have to be the least bit psychic to visit this center carrying on the work of the late Edgar Cayce, who settled in Virginia Beach and built his Psychic Hospital here in 1928. Cayce's own psychic talent manifested itself when he found he could enter into an altered state of consciousness and answer questions on any topic. His answers, or "discourses," now called "readings," number some 14,305. If you don't know about Cayce, show up at 2pm for a 30-minute movie about his life, followed by a 30-minute guided tour. The Meditation Room on the third floor of the

Tips The Sound of Freedom

The **Naval Air Station Oceana** is home to those low-flying U.S. Navy F-14 Tomcat and F/A-18 Hornet fighter planes whose thundering jets disturb the peace over the beach. That's the "sound of freedom" to patriotic locals; the "sound of money" to wags who emphasize that Oceana is the city's largest employer. Other than when they roar over at a 600-foot altitude, the best way for us civilians to see them up close is on a **NAS Oceana Master Jet Base Tour** offered by Carey Transportation in cooperation with the city of Virginia Beach (✆ **757/491-7866;** www.beachstreetusa.com).The tours depart from the visitor information kiosk at Atlantic Avenue and 24th Street from mid-June through Labor Day weekend, Monday through Friday at 9:30 and 11:30am. Fares are $11 for adults; $9 for seniors and children 3 to 11, free for kids 2 and under. Everyone older than 18 years old will need a picture ID to get on the base. Do not bring backpacks.

Dolphin-Watching & Splashing with the Seals

Provided you're not overly prone to seasickness, one of the most interesting things to do here is to take an offshore **dolphin-watching cruise** ★★★ given by the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center (daily June–Sept, Sat–Sun in spring and fall). The center also has **whale-watching cruises** in winter (also offshore) and **sea life–collecting trips** in summer. The trips cost $19 to $28 for adults, $14 to $24 for children 11 and under. The boats leave from Rudee Inlet. Call the aquarium or check its website for schedules (✆ **757/425-3474;** www.virginiaaquarium.com). To make reservations, which are required, call (✆ **757/385-3474**).

Another marvelous experience at the center, especially for children 8 and older, is its **Harbor Seal Splash** ★★★. Accompanied by an animal-care specialist, you actually get into a pool and splash around with the resident harbor seals and participate in a training session. The 2-hour sessions take place April through September. If you can afford it, the $125 per person is worth it. Call ✆ **757/385-0300** for reservations, which are required.

visitor center offers a spectacular view of the ocean and is painted with colors chosen because Cayce's readings suggested they can help attain higher consciousness. In the Psychic Hospital building, the health center and spa offer steam baths, facials, and massages to the public.

215 67th St. (at Atlantic Ave.). ✆ **757/428-3588.** www.edgarcayce.org. Free admission. Mon–Sat 10am–8pm; Sun noon–6pm. 30-min. film daily 2pm. 30-min. guided tours depart daily 2:30pm. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25.

Military Aviation Museum ★ Located in a hangar beside a small airstrip in the strawberry fields south of the rural crossroads of Pungo, this surprisingly good museum houses a fine collection of historic military aircraft, all in mint condition and all but three of which can still fly. If you are lucky, someone will roll out a World War II–vintage P51 Mustang, P40 Flying Tiger, or RAF Spitfire and take off. You cannot fly with them, but you can climb into a P51 simulator and feel what it's like to zoom around up there. When they're not flying them, staffers and volunteers stay busy restoring other craft. Rather than drive here, you ride the museum's double-decker bus from the Oceanfront from May through October. Call for bus reservations.

1341 Princess Anne Rd. ✆ **757/721-PROP** [7767]. www.militaryaviationmuseum.org. Admission $10 adults, $9 seniors and military, $5 children 6–18, free for kids 5 and under. Simulator rides $5. Daily 9am–5pm. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec. 25. Museum is 14 miles south of Rudee Inlet. From the Oceanfront take Gen. Booth Blvd. south, turn left on Princess Anne Rd. (the next traffic light after Nimmo Rd.) to museum on right.

Old Cape Henry Lighthouse ★★ Built in 1791–92, this picturesque brick structure was the first lighthouse authorized by the U.S. Congress. It marked the southern entrance to Chesapeake Bay until 1881, when the "new" lighthouse across the road took over. If you're in shape, you can climb the 191 steps to the top for a spectacular view over Cape Henry, the bay, and the ocean. The gift shop carries a plethora of lighthouse-themed items.

Also across the road, the Jamestown colonists' **First Landing Site** is marked by a cross and plaque where they "set up a Crosse at Chesapeake Bay and named that place Cape Henry" for Henry, Prince of Wales. Also here are a monumental relief map showing the French and British naval engagement off Cape Henry during the Revolutionary War and a statue of the French commander. Now known as the **Battle Off the Capes,** this decisive battle effectively trapped Cornwallis at Yorktown and helped end British dominion in America.

Note: You must be more than 4 feet tall to climb the lighthouse. This is all part of the U.S. Army's Fort Story, so everyone 18 and over will need a photo ID to access the fort's historic area, and your car will likely be searched.

583 Atlantic Ave. (in Fort Story). ✆ **757/422-9421.** www.apva.org. Admission $4 adults, $2 children 3–12, free for children 2 and younger. Mar 16–Oct 31 daily 10am–5pm; Nov 1–Mar 15 daily 10am–4pm. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 5–Jan 4.

Old Coast Guard Station Museum and Gift Shop ★

In the heart of the oceanfront resort area, this small museum is housed in the white-clapboard building constructed in 1903 as a lifesaving station. Its exhibits recall rescue missions and shipwrecks along the coast. Not all is old here, for you can manipulate a video cam atop the building to get a bird's-eye view of the beach. You can see it all in 45 minutes. An excellent gift shop carries clocks, drawings, books, and other things nautical.

24th St. and Atlantic Ave. ✆ **757/422-1587.** www.oldcoastguardstation.com. Admission $4 adults, $3 seniors, $2 children 6–18, free for children 5 and under. Summer Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm; off season Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm. Last tour 4pm. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Dec 31.

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center ★★★ Kids

This entertaining, educational facility focusing on Virginia's marine environment is a wonderful place to take the kids. Its 45 acres are beside Owl Creek salt marsh, a wildlife habitat. You can easily spend half a day here, a full day to see—and learn—it all. Plan to spend at least half of your time in the main building, where touch tanks will fascinate you and the kids, who also will love playing with the switches and dials in a dark room designed like a submarine, complete with sonar "pings." The sub looks out into one of several room-size aquariums holding a myriad of sea turtles, sharks, rays, and other species found in Virginia waters. Movies in the center's 3-D IMAX theater feature animals leaping off the screen at you.

As you leave the main building, take a look at the salt marsh room, which will prepare you for a .3-mile nature hike along the creek, or to take an informative 35-minute cruise in a 50-passenger pontoon boat on Owl Creek and through Virginia Beach's last undeveloped salt marsh. There's an observation tower from which you might see some of the wild animals living on an island across the creek. The boardwalk nature trail leads to the smaller Owl Creek Marsh Pavilion, were river otters play in an outdoor tank and more than 50 species of birds fly about an aviary. It also houses the fascinating "Macro Marsh" display in which everything is enlarged 10 times normal size to give you a crab's eye view of the world.

717 General Booth Blvd. (southwest of Rudee Inlet). ✆ **757/385-3474.** www.virginiaaquarium.com. Admission $12 adults, $11 seniors, $8 children 4–11, free for children 3 and younger. IMAX tickets $8 adults, $7.50 seniors, $7 children 3–11, free for children 2 and under. Owl Creek Cruise $7 per person. Combination museum and IMAX tickets $17 adults, $16 seniors, $14 children 3–11, free for children 2 and under. Combination museum and Owl Creek Cruise tickets $17 adults, $16 seniors, $13 children 3–11, free for children 2 and under. Memorial Day to Labor Day daily 9am–7pm; rest of year daily 9am–5pm. Owl Creek cruises Apr–Sept. Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25.

HISTORIC HOMES

After touring Williamsburg, I am seldom in the mood to traipse through more old houses. Nevertheless, Virginia Beach has three to offer, two of which are somewhat different than those in Williamsburg. Dating to around 1680 and 1725, respectively, the Adam Thoroughgood and Lynnhaven houses are interesting because they were both built in the fashion of English farm cottages of Elizabethan times, years before Georgian architecture became prevalent elsewhere in Colonial Virginia.

Rather than drive yourself through Virginia Beach's sometimes horrific traffic, you can take a **Summer History Tour** offered by Carey Transportation in cooperation with the city of Virginia Beach (✆ **757/491-7866;** www.beachstreetusa.com), which goes to the three historic homes reviewed below plus the Cape Henry Lighthouse and the Old Coast Guard Museum. The tours depart from the visitor information kiosk at Atlantic Avenue and 24th Street from mid-June through Labor Day weekend, Wednesday and Thursday at 10am. Fares are $10 for adults; $7 for students.

Adam Thoroughgood House ★ One of the oldest homes in Virginia and the most interesting of the trio, this medieval English-style cottage sits on 4½ acres of lawn and garden overlooking the Lynnhaven River. It was built around 1680 by one of Adam Thoroughgood's grandsons (historians believe its namesake didn't live in the house). The interior has exposed wood beams and whitewashed walls, and though the furnishings did not belong to the Thoroughgoods, they are original to the period and reflect the family's English ancestry.

1636 Parish Rd. (at Thoroughgood Lane). ✆ **757/460-0007.** www.vbgov.com. Admission $4 adults, $3 seniors and children 13–18, $2 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Tues–Sat 9am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Guided 30-min. tours available by request (last tour 4:30pm). From oceanfront, take I-264 W. to Exit 3, go north on Independence Blvd. (Va. 225), turn right on Pleasure House Rd., right on Thoroughgood Sq., left on Thoroughgood Dr., and follow the very small signs to the house.

Francis Land House Built as a plantation manor in the mid–18th century (now beside one of the region's busiest highways), this Georgian-style brick house is a restoration work in progress. Some rooms are furnished with antiques and reproductions. The highlights here are 7 acres of herb, vegetable, and pleasure gardens and a .1-mile wetlands nature trail.

3131 Virginia Beach Blvd. (just west of Kings Grant Rd.). ✆ **757/431-4000.** www.vbgov.com. Admission $4 adults, $3 seniors and children 13–18, $2 children 6–12, free for children 5 and younger. Tues–Sat 9am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Guided 30-min. house tours depart by request (last tour 4:30pm).

Lynnhaven House Built in 1725, this medieval-style cottage still doesn't have running water or electricity. When the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities took the house over in 1971, it stripped away plaster and discovered the Champford ceiling beams in their original condition (note the chalk marks carpenters made in 1725). Tours led by costumed docents explain the house and interpret Colonial lifestyles. We moderns won't find Lynnhaven oysters as gigantic as the shells excavated from the trash pit and displayed in the kitchen.

4405 Wishart Rd. (off Independence Blvd.). ✆ **757/460-1688.** www.vbgov.com. Admission $4 adults, $3 seniors, $2 children 5–16, free for children 4 and younger. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun noon–4pm. Guided 45-min. tours depart by request. From the beach, take I-264 W. to Exit 3, head north on Independence Blvd. (Va. 225), take a right, and drive 1/3 mile on Wishart Rd.

WHERE TO STAY

The hotels and B&Bs listed below are just the tip of the more than 11,000 hotel rooms in Virginia Beach. Even with that many places to stay, you should reserve as far in advance as possible from mid-June through Labor Day, and especially on weekends when room rates are at their highest. Late spring and early fall are good times to visit; both have warm weather and lower rates. Least expensive prices are in the cold winter months, when few come here.

With so many hotels offering so many rooms, choosing the right one can be a daunting task. The Virginia Beach visitor information center's annual "Vacation Guide" lists all the local hotels and their current rates (see "Essentials," earlier in this section). It also distributes an annual accommodations directory published by the **Virginia Beach Hotel/Motel Association** (www.va-beach-hotels.com). The association's website has links to many of the hotels, most of which give their current room rates.

The Belvedere Resort Motel ★★ Value This five-story building is the crown jewel of the few less expensive, family-operated oceanfront hotels left on the Oceanfront here. It justifiably attracts lots of repeat guests, so book early. Like the nearby Courtyard by Marriott Oceanfront North (see below), it's far enough north to avoid the rowdy crowds. The motel-style rooms have screen doors that swing open to balconies facing the ocean. The combo tub/shower bathrooms are small but compensate with separate sinks and vanities. A few rooms have king-size beds (most have two doubles). The 10 units on the ends of the building are somewhat larger and have cooking facilities. There's a small swimming pool, sun deck, and the **Belvedere Coffee Shop** (see "Where to Dine," below). Guests also get free use of bicycles.

Oceanfront at 36th St. (P.O. Box 451), Virginia Beach, VA 23458. ✆ **800/425-0612** or 757/425-0612. Fax 757/425-1397. 50 units. $84–$166 double. AE, MC, V. Free parking. Closed late Oct to Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant (breakfast and lunch); bikes; pool, Wi-Fi (in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, kitchen (in efficiencies).

The Breakers Resort Inn Another reasonably priced, family-operated oceanfront hotel, the Breakers occupies a yellow boxlike nine-story building. Its rooms are comfortably furnished with contemporary pieces. All have oceanfront balconies; some rooms with king-size beds contain hot tubs. Efficiency apartments have a bedroom with two queen-size beds, a living room with a Murphy bed, and kitchenette with two-burner stove (but no oven). Additional amenities include free bicycles. The on-site cafe serves breakfast and lunch.

1503 Atlantic Ave. (oceanfront at 16th St.), Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **800/237-7532** or 757/428-1821. Fax 757/422-9602. www.breakersresort.com. 56 units. $55–$300 double. Packages available. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant (breakfast and lunch); bikes; pool; Wi-Fi (in public areas). *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Internet, kitchen (in efficiencies).

Cavalier Hotel ★★ Virginia Beach's best-equipped resort actually consists of two hotels—the original Cavalier on the Hill, built in 1927 across Atlantic Avenue from the beach, and the Cavalier on the Ocean, which has been kept up-to-date since it opened in 1973. Although it's not directly on the beach and is open only during the summer for overflow guests, the original building has all the charm. Its enclosed veranda with white-wicker furnishings, potted plants, and great ocean views evoke images of the days when F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald danced here. Some of its guest rooms have Chippendale reproductions, Colonial-print fabrics, gilt-framed artwork, and museum-quality decorative objects. The heated indoor Olympic-size pool is magnificently tiled and illuminated

by a skylight. Open all year, the newer beachside building has nicely decorated contemporary-style rooms, all with oceanfront balconies. A shuttle connects the two wings when both are open. The boardwalk stops just short of the Cavalier, so unlike all other hotels here, its lawn fronts directly on the beach.

Oceanfront at 42nd St., Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **800/446-8199** or 757/425-8555. Fax 757/428-7957. www.cavalierhotel.com. 400 units. $99–$289 double; $199–$499 suite. Weekend and other packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Parking $7.50. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 2 bars; bikes; children's programs; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; 2 pools; room service; 3 tennis courts; watersports equipment. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (in suites and oceanfront rooms), hair dryer, Wi-Fi (in beach wing).

Courtyard by Marriott Oceanfront North ★ Value This 11-story oceanfront hotel was one of the first Courtyards designed as much as a resort as for business travelers. Making this a good family choice is the oceanfront's largest and best outdoor pool, with waterfalls, bridges, a lifeguard on duty, and its own bar. Here the beach substitutes for an actual courtyard, and big window walls look out to the Boardwalk from the plush lobby and bright, casual bistro, which provides breakfast and lunch (you can dine outside in fine weather). Marriott's standard furniture prevails in the spacious guest quarters, all of which have balconies overlooking the ocean. Ten units have whirlpool tubs. The eight huge suites have bedrooms and living rooms, which come equipped with wet bars, microwave ovens, and refrigerators. A small indoor pool and a fitness room look out to the beach.

Its slightly older sister, the **Courtyard by Marriott Oceanfront South,** 2501 Atlantic Ave., at 25th Street (✆ **800/321-2211** or 757/491-6222; www.courtyardoceanfront.com), lacks an outdoor pool, but otherwise is identical.

3737 Atlantic Ave. (oceanfront at 37th St.), Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **800/321-2211** or 757/437-0098. Fax 757/437-4272. www.courtyardoceanfrontnorth.com. 160 units. $99–$329 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Free valet parking in summer. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; Jacuzzi; outdoor & indoor pools; room service (dinner only). *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, high-speed Internet.

Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront ★★ This 21-story tower opened on the oceanfront in 2005 and immediately raised the stakes for all other hotels here. You'll see what I mean upon entering the grand lobby, where a huge water wall shaped like a Neptune's shell changes its colors every few minutes. The hotel's most unique feature is its rooftop recreation area, featuring a heated indoor pool, snack restaurant, bar, and an outdoor pool whose horizon seemingly meets the sea. You can see all the way to Norfolk from up here on a clear day. On the ground level, the casual but sophisticated **Catch 31** fishhouse is one of the beach's better restaurants (p. 314), and part of it becomes the fine-dining **Salacia** at night. Parlor suites have Murphy beds and kitchenettes. Empyrean Club units on the top three floors have the best views and their own 24-hour concierge lounge serving continental breakfast, evening hors d'oeuvres, and cocktails. All units except the City View rooms have balconies. This Hilton and the Cavalier (see above) are the two best resorts here.

3001 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **800/445-8667** or 757/213-3001. Fax 757/213-3019. www.hiltonvb.com. 289 units. $139–$429 double; $270–$1,000 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $11. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; concierge; concierge-level rooms; health club; pool; room service; spa; watersports equipment. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen (in Parlor suites), Wi-Fi.

Newcastle Motel Situated beside the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum (p. 307), the 10-story, family-operated Newcastle offers the most unusual mix of rooms on the beach, ranging from standard motel units to romantic deluxe models with canopy beds, gas fireplaces, his-and-her shower heads, and wooden Venetian blinds to keep passersby

from watching you frolic in big whirlpool tubs. All units have balconies, refrigerators, microwave ovens, and spa tubs. Guests get free access to bicycles in summer. The seasonal **Lighthouse Beachside Grille** to one side offers reasonably priced meals under a big, beachside awning.

1201 Atlantic Ave. (oceanfront at 12th St.), Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **800/346-3176** or 757/428-3981. Fax 757/491-4394. www.newcastlehotelvb.com. 84 units. $49–$229 double. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, kitchen (2 units), Wi-Fi.

Ocean Cove Motel/Angie's Guest Cottage ★ Value Once a terrific bed-and-breakfast known simply as Angie's Guest Cottage, this establishment has been spiffed up in recent years, but it no longer serves breakfast. It does, however, still house one of Virginia's few official Hostelling International hostels, offering men's, women's, and coed dorm rooms plus a communal kitchen. Consequently, you'll find a delightful mix of American and international folks here. The original cottage, built in 1918 as family housing for the nearby lifesaving station (now the Old Coast Guard Station Museum and Gift Shop; p. 309), houses two simple but comfortable units with kitchens. Next door are two kitchen-equipped apartments, each with porch and deck. Across the yard are three one-story cottages, each with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and full kitchens; they are rented by the week and are the only units here with telephones.

302 24th St. (btw. Pacific and Arctic aves.), Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **757/491-1830.** www.oceancovemotel.com or www.angiescottage.com. 9 units (all with bathroom), 34 dorm beds. $75–$164 double room; $15–$20 dorm bed; $1,000–$1,550 cottage (per week). MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV (duplex units and cottages), fridge (upstairs, duplex, and cottage units), kitchen (duplex and cottage units), Wi-Fi (some units).

A Bed & Breakfast near the Beach

Barclay Cottage ★ Value This two-story, white-clapboard Victorian with wrap-around verandas is *very* coastal Southern, with rocking chairs on the porches and green shutters trimming tall windows hung with lace curtains. It was used as a boardinghouse and school for many years before being converted into this charming B&B. The guest rooms are adorned with Victorian pieces, including feather beds, and the two downstairs rooms have jetted bathtubs. Innkeepers Steve and Marie-Louise LaFond serve a full family-style breakfast in the lounge promptly at 9am. They also provide beach buggies to haul your complimentary umbrellas, chairs, and boogie boards to the beach, a 2-block walk away. Their "business center" is a computer squirreled away in an armoire in the upstairs hallway, and their "fitness center" consists of a basket full of barbells.

400 16th St. (at Arctic Ave.), Virginia Beach, VA 23451. ✆ **866/466-1895** or 757/422-1956. www.barclaycottage.com. 5 units (3 with private bathroom). $95–$225 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

My favorite spot for a beachside breakfast is the **Belvedere Coffee Shop,** an old-fashioned diner at the Belvedere Motel, Oceanfront at 36th Street (✆ **757/425-1397**). It's worth waiting a few extra minutes to get the two-person booth with one bench facing the ocean. Prices range from $3 to $10. It's open daily 7am to 2:30pm.

The relatively inexpensive **Big Sam's Inlet Cafe & Raw Bar,** 300 Winston-Salem Ave. (✆ **757/428-4858**), overlooking the WaveRunner docks on Rudee Inlet, is another good early-morning choice with a view. It's open daily from 7am to 2am, making it a good place for a late-night snack, too.

For picnic fare, head to the beach branch of **Taste Unlimited,** 213 36th St. (✆ **757/243-3011**), at Pacific Avenue. This gourmet market has excellent sandwiches and salads to eat in or carry out, and you can order a box lunch to eat at the beach. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm, Sunday from 11am to 5pm.

Catch 31 Fish House and Bar ★★ INTERNATIONAL This modernistic restaurant serves seafood almost as good as its spectacular setting on the ground floor of the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront. Floor-to-ceiling windows look out on the ocean in one direction, to the city's lively Neptune Park on the other. Reserve an outdoor table in summer to be treated to the park's nightly life entertainment. You can fill up at the raw bar with steamed shellfish or with a "seafood tower," Catch 31's signature dish—two or three plates stacked high with chilled crabmeat, Maine lobster, Chesapeake Bay crab legs, and a few other items with accompanying sauces. The menu changes as soon as fresh catch is delivered, so keep your eye on the ever-changing specials board for the latest arrivals. Meat lovers can opt for high-quality steaks, ribs, and chops, and there's a nightly pasta for vegetarians. At night part of the restaurant becomes the fine-dining **Salacia** (like, $60 or more for a Kobe steak).

3001 Atlantic Ave. (in Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront). ✆ **757/213-3472.** www.31ocean.com. Reservations highly recommended. Main courses $22–$45. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 6:30am–11pm; Sat–Sun 7am–11pm (to 10pm daily off season). Bar daily 11am–2am.

Doc Taylor's ★ Value AMERICAN Occupying its own vintage beach cottage, this is the breakfast and lunch operation of Tautog's Restaurant (see below), with which it shares owners and a parking lot. It's really a charming version of a diner, with a kitchen with counter seating in the old living room. The choice seats are on the enclosed porch. Breakfast provides the usual grilled items plus toasted bagels and my favorite, the "Deep South," with diced country ham and eggs over cheese grits. You can wash it down with a bloody Mary or mimosa.

207 23rd St. (btw. Atlantic and Pacific aves.). ✆ **757/425-1960.** Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $3–$15; lunch $5–$8.50. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 7am–3pm.

La Bella Italia Cafe & Trattoria Value ITALIAN This deli is an excellent place to pick up sandwiches or Italian breads, pastries, and cookies for a day at the beach. After dark, you had best reserve a table, for a mesquite-fired oven produces the area's best pizzas, and locals flock here for bowls of homemade pasta. You'll recognize a few southern Italian favorites such as spaghetti Bolognese, but others are more creative. For starters, try the bruschetta, fried calamari, or in summer when the tomatoes are ripe and sweet, the *caprese* salad with homemade mozzarella.

1065 Laskin Rd. (in Laskin Center, 1 block east of Birdneck Rd.). ✆ **757/422-8536.** www.labellaitalia.com. Reservations highly recommended for dinner. Pizza $13–$15; main courses $17–$23. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–10pm; Sun 4–9pm.

Rudee's on the Inlet SEAFOOD/STEAKS This popular restaurant, occupying a replica of an old Coast Guard station, is dark and cozy on the inside, with big louvered windows overlooking Rudee Inlet. But that's not where you want to dine in good weather. Instead, walk across the parking lot to the marina-side sun deck and grab one of the gliding booths (that's right: you, the booth, and its green canopy actually slide back and forth). They serve a full menu out here. The deck is one of the most popular after-work watering holes for the locals. Although steaks and other fare are offered, seafood is the highlight. Everything is prepared to order, so kick back and enjoy the waterside

setting while the chef fries or broils your fish, shrimp, scallops, above-average crab cakes, and oysters (best when they are being harvested during months spelled with an "r": Sept–Apr). Many fresh-off-the-boat items are market priced. Valet parking is available.

277 Mediterranean Ave. (at Rudee Inlet). ✆ **757/425-1777.** www.rudees.com. Reservations not accepted, but call ahead for preferred seating. Sandwiches $8–$14; main courses $15–$30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–10pm; Sun 9am–10pm (bar later depending on business).

Tautog's Restaurant ★★ Finds SEAFOOD Occupying one of the few remaining Victorian-era beach cottages still standing in the heart of the resort area, this is the most charming restaurant here and one of the most popular with locals, many of whom ride their bikes here in summer to avoid the beach's parking nightmare. You can dine inside, but opt instead for a table under ceiling fans out on the front porch. Seafood predominates, with "Wesley's world-famous crab cakes" leading the list. Another winner is the flounder with crab-and-shrimp filling poached in parchment. It's all very good value. You might find a space in the small parking lot in the rear (take the alley btw. here and Doc Taylor's).

205 23rd St. (btw. Atlantic and Pacific aves.). ✆ **757/422-0081.** www.tautogs.com. Reservations recommended. Sandwiches $8–$10; main courses $13–$24. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Wed 5:30–10pm; Thurs–Sat 5:30–11pm.

Waterman's Surfside Grille Value SEAFOOD Many hotels have dining rooms beside the Boardwalk here, but this big coastal-style building is the last stand-alone, family-owned restaurant right on the beach. Surfers started the business as a hot dog stand in the 1960s, although the present full-service restaurant—now a certified city landmark—dates to 1982, with a thorough renovation in 2006. Traditional Chesapeake-style seafood stars here and all of it is fresh, not frozen. I think the crab cakes are the best on the oceanfront, and you can order one of them as a money-saving sandwich. During summer you can wander into the beachside patio without reservations. Given the higher prices you pay for inferior quality elsewhere, the value-for-money is good here.

415 Atlantic Ave. (at 5th St.). ✆ **757/428-3644.** www.watermans.com. Reservations recommended. Sandwiches and burgers $7.50–$14; main courses $15–$24. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm (bar later).

VIRGINIA BEACH AFTER DARK

The prime performing arts venue is the 20,000-seat, open-air **Verizon Wireless Virginia Beach Amphitheater,** inland at Princess Anne and Dam Neck roads (✆ **757/368-8888** for schedule, 757/671-8100 for tickets). Big-name singers and bands appear here as well as more highbrow acts like the Virginia Symphony. About 7,500 seats are under cover, with some 12,500 spaces out on the lawn. Big TV screens and a state-of-the-art sound system let everyone see and hear what's going on. The season runs April through October.

During summer, there is nightly entertainment in **Neptune Park,** on the oceanfront at 30th Street, and frequent outdoor concerts on stages at 7th, 17th, and 24th streets along the Boardwalk (the visitor information center can tell you when and where). The biggest is the annual **Verizon Wireless American Music Festival** (✆ **757/425-3111**) over Labor Day weekend on the beach at 5th Street. You might catch KC & the Sunshine Band on one stage, the Steve Miller Band on another.

The visitor center can tell you what's on, or go to **www.beachstreetusa.com,** the city's official entertainment site. As in Norfolk, ***Veer Magazine*** (www.veermag.com), and the "Daily Break" section in the local rag, ***The Virginian-Pilot*** (www.pilotonline.com), are good sources of entertainment information.

Hotels and restaurants all along the beach have live music for nighttime dancing during the summer. Just follow your ears along the Boardwalk—but remember, some pubs along Atlantic Avenue can get rough late at night.

3 CHINCOTEAGUE & ASSATEAGUE ISLANDS ★★★

83 miles N of Virginia Beach and Norfolk; 185 miles SE of Washington, D.C.

Winding waterways, abundant wildlife, and down-home cooking and hospitality will welcome you to Virginia's Eastern Shore. The Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay border the state's 70-mile-long end of the Delmarva Peninsula—so-called because it's shared by Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. A map of the Peninsula may lead you to think that innumerable beaches wait to be explored on the string of barrier islands. Yes, there are beaches out there, but most of them are privately owned or preserved in their natural state by the government, the Nature Conservancy, and other organizations, which keep them off-limits to members of the general public like us.

But we can visit two of Virginia's jewels: Chincoteague and Assateague islands. Back when I had a regular job, I used to spend my summer weekends relaxing at these two relatively remote islands, which are unlike anything else in Virginia.

Wonderful Assateague is home to the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore, which together prevent any development and thus protect hordes of wildlife and 37 miles of pristine beach. In addition to Assateague's famed herds of wild ponies, it is on the main Atlantic Flyway, and its population of both migratory and resident birds is simply astounding. Indeed, it's one of the top places in Virginia to see wildlife. What you will *not* see is a single hotel or condo as you laze away your days on Assateague's remarkably undisturbed beach.

Protected from the ocean by Assateague, Chincoteague Island is surrounded by bays full of flounder, oyster beds, and clam shoals. Settled by the English in the late 1600s, it is famous as the setting of Marguerite Henry's children's book, *Misty of Chincoteague.* Later made into a film, the book aroused wide interest in the annual pony penning and swim on the last Wednesday in July, when pony-size wild horses are rounded up on Assateague, forced to swim across to Chincoteague, and sold to benefit the local fire department.

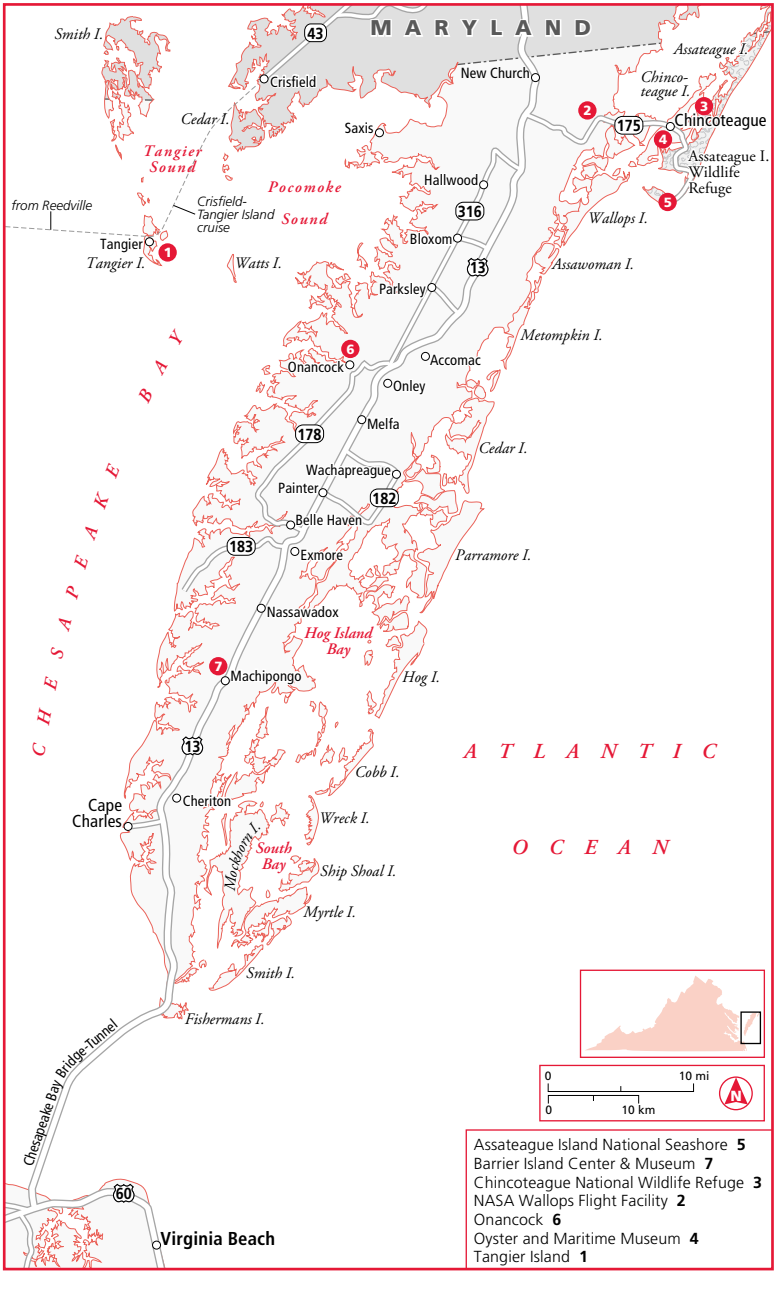
While Chincoteague is beginning to come out of its self-induced doze and experience a modern building boom (condos have replaced some of my favorite waterside bars), it retains much of its scruffy fishing-village charm. Rickety old piers still jut out into the water next to modern motels, and except for busy summer weekends, watermen in work boats still outnumber tourists on jet skis.

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Information

The **Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce,** 6733 Maddox Blvd., Chincoteague Island, VA 23336 (✆ **757/336-6161;** fax 757/336-1242; www.chincoteaguechamber.com), operates a visitor center in the traffic circle on Maddox Boulevard, about a mile before the Assateague Bridge. It's open Monday through Saturday 9am to 4:30pm.

Chincoteague Waves magazine (www.chincoteaguewaves.com), which you will see at the chamber and elsewhere, is a good source.


MARYLAND
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Crisfield
New Church
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Chinco-teague I.
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Assateague I. Wildlife Refuge
5
Tangier Sound
Pocomoke Sound
Hallwood
316
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Watts I.
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Onancock
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Melfa
178
Cedar I.
Wachapreague
Painter
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Belle Haven
183
Exmore
Parramore I.
Nassawadox
Hog Island Bay
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Machipongo
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CHESAPEAKE BAY
ATLANTIC
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13
Cobb I.
Cape Charles
Cheriton
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Assateague Island National Seashore 5
Barrier Island Center & Museum 7
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge 3
NASA Wallops Flight Facility 2
Onancock 6
Oyster and Maritime Museum 4
Tangier Island 1

For information about the area, contact **Virginia's Eastern Shore Tourism Commission,** P.O. Box 72, Tasley, VA 23441 (✆ **757/787-8268;** www.esvatourism.org).

The Virginia Tourism Corporation (see "Visitor Information" in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 13) operates a **Virginia Welcome Center** (✆ **757/824-5000**) on U.S. 13 just south of the Maryland state line.

Getting There

There is neither airport nor public transportation on the Eastern Shore, so you'll need a **car.** From Norfolk and Virginia Beach take U.S. 13 north across the **Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel** (www.cbbt.com), a beautiful 18-mile drive over and under the bay ($12 toll per car). U.S. 13 runs north-south down the center of the Eastern Shore. To reach Chincoteague, turn east on Va. 175, about 65 miles north of the bridge-tunnel and 5 miles south of the Maryland line.

Area Layout

Va. 175 crosses several miles of salt marshes and the Chincoteague Channel before crossing a new bridge onto the island at the intersection of **Main Street,** which runs north-south along the western shore, and **Maddox Boulevard,** which heads east to Assateague Island. Maddox Boulevard is Chincoteague's prime commercial strip, with an abundance of shops, restaurants, and motels. Turn right at the stoplight to reach the motels, marinas, and bait shops along Main Street south of the bridge. **Church Street** goes east 2 blocks from the village and turns into **East Side Drive,** which runs along the island's Eastern Shore. **Ridge Road** and **Chicken City Road** (yes, it's really named Chicken City) together run north-south down the middle of the island. On Assateague, there's only one road other than a wildlife drive, and it goes directly to the beach.

Getting Around

These flat islands are great for biking. Although there are no bike paths per se on Chincoteague, there are lanes set aside on some of the streets, particularly Maddox Boulevard as it approaches the Assateague Bridge. Bikes are allowed on the trails and paths on Assateague, so you can ride all the way to the beach. Several shops on Maddox Boulevard rent bikes of various sizes. The **Bike Depot & Beach Outfitters,** at the Refuge Inn (✆ **757/336-5511;** p. 323), and **Jus' Bikes,** 6527 Maddox Blvd. (✆ **757/336-6700**), are closest to Assateague Island. Rates start at $3 an hour at both, $14 a day.

Another easy way to get around during summer is on the **Pony Express Trolley** (✆ **757/336-6519**), which circles Chincoteague Island every 30 minutes Sunday through Thursday 5 to 11pm, Friday and Saturday 5pm to midnight. The fare is 25¢ per ride, exact change required. The trolley also has summertime narrated **tours** of Chincoteague, usually on Tuesday and Thursday at 2:45 and 3:45pm, but call ahead for a current schedule. Tickets go on sale the same day for these first-come, first-served tours, which depart from the Chincoteague Community Center, 6155 Community Drive, off Deep Hole near Maddox Boulevard. Fares are $3 for adults, $2 for children younger than 13.

ASSATEAGUE ISLAND ★★★

You and I own all of Assateague Island, which is completely occupied by the **Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge** and the **Assateague Island National Seashore,** and thus jointly administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. Of the island's 37 miles, 12 are in Virginia. Wildlife on this end is afforded a higher degree of protection than in the Maryland sector. In fact, a fence at the state line keeps Maryland's wild horses and other critters away from the Virginia side.

Tips Book Early for the "Pony Penning"

The famous **wild ponies**—they're actually small horses—have lived on Assateague since the 1600s. Legend says their ancestors swam ashore from a shipwrecked Spanish galleon, but most likely English settlers put the first horses on Assateague, which formed a natural corral. Separated by a fence from their cousins in Maryland, the Virginia horses are now owned by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Department, which rounds them up and sells the foals at auction during its famous **Pony Penning** on the last Wednesday in July. Make your hotel reservations well in advance of this extremely popular event.

Bird-watchers know Assateague Island as a prime Atlantic Flyway habitat where sightings of peregrine falcons, snow geese, great blue heron, and snowy egrets have been made. The annual Waterfowl Week, generally held around Thanksgiving, takes place when a large number of migratory birds use the refuge.

The Wildlife Refuge

You first enter the **Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge,** which is open May through September daily 5am to 10pm, April and October daily 6am to 8pm, November through March daily 6am to 6pm. The refuge accepts the America the Beautiful entrance passes issued by federal agencies; otherwise, admission is $5 per vehicle for 1 day, $15 per vehicle for 1 week, free for pedestrians and bikers.

Unless you're here exclusively for the beach, start your visit at the refuge's **Herbert H. Bateman Education and Administrative Center** (✆ **757/336-3696**), on the left, ¼-mile east of the bridge, where you can watch a video about the refuge and its wildlife. It has wildlife and birding programs, which are great for kids. The center is open daily 9am to 5pm during summer, to 4pm off season (closed New Year's Day and Christmas).

You may see some of the wild ponies while driving to the beach, but the best place to see them—your chance is greatest at dawn—is on the paved **Wildlife Drive,** which runs for 3¼ miles through the marshes. This one-lane, one-way road is open to pedestrians and bicyclists all day, to motorized vehicles after 3pm. The **Woodland Trail,** a 1.6-mile hiking loop, is another good place to spot the wild ponies grazing out in the marshes. But be advised: This area is infested with mosquitoes, so bring and use insect repellent.

The most informative way to see the multitudinous wildlife is on a **Wildlife Tour** (✆ **757/336-3696**) in an air-conditioned bus. The 1¾-hour narrated rides depart the visitor center at 10am and 4pm daily Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, and on weekends in March, April, September, and October. The tour costs $12 for adults, $6 for children under 13. Buy your tickets at the visitor center.

If your heart's up to it, you can climb the 198 steps for a terrific view from atop **Assateague Island Lighthouse,** built in 1867 to warn ships of the shoals offshore. It is open to the public from 9am to 3pm Thursday through Monday from mid-June through September, on weekends from mid-April to mid-June and in October and November. Admission is $4 adults, $2 children under 13.

Note: Hours and days for the wildlife tours and lighthouse can change from one year to the next, so call ahead to make sure. For that and other **information** about the refuge and visitor-center seasons and programs, contact the Refuge Manager, Chincoteague

Kids Pony Rides

You can't bring a child to Chincoteague without letting him or her ride a pony—perhaps one of Misty's descendants—at the **Chincoteague Pony Centre,** 6417 Carriage Dr. (✆ **757/336-2776;** www.chincoteague.com/ponycentre), off Chicken City Road south of Maddox Boulevard. This small-scale equestrian center is open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day daily 9am to 10pm, with pony rides ($6) 9am to 1pm and 3:30 to 6pm, with a pony show Monday through Saturday at 8pm. Spring and fall hours are Friday and Saturday from 9am to 6pm, with the pony show Saturday at 8pm. Admission is $8 adults, $5 for children. The gift shop sells all things pony, and you can even buy a pony.

National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 62, Chincoteague Island, VA 23336 (✆ **757/336-6122;** www.fws.gov/northeast/chinco).

The National Seashore

The beach itself is in the **Assateague Island National Seashore,** operated by the National Park Service. You'll find a visitor center, bathhouses, and summertime lifeguards. In addition to swimming and sunning, activities at the beach include shell collecting (most productive at the tip of the Tom's Cove spit of land, on the island's southern tip) and hiking. You can ride a bike here from Chincoteague on the paved bike path beside the main road (or make a detour along Wildlife Dr.) to the **Tom's Cove Visitor Center,** which has a splendid view over the marshes. Rangers give programs such as wildlife viewing, aquarium talks, nighttime hikes, and campfires. The visitor center is open daily 9am to 6pm in summer, 9am to 5pm spring and autumn, 9am to 4pm in winter. It is closed Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Several **regulations** apply. Pets and alcoholic beverages are prohibited, even in your vehicle. In-line skating is not allowed, nor are off-road vehicles. Surf fishing with a Virginia state license is allowed except on the lifeguard beach at Tom's Cove. Climbing and digging in the sand dunes is illegal. No overnight sleeping is allowed anywhere (backcountry camping is permitted on the Maryland end, a 12½-mile hike from the Virginia-side visitor centers). And finally, thou shalt not feed the horses.

For information about the national seashore, contact the Superintendent, Assateague Island National Seashore, 8586 Beach Rd. (P.O. Box 38), Chincoteague Island, VA 23336 (✆ **757/336-6577;** www.nps.gov/asis).

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

CRUISES While most visitors head for the beach on Assateague, don't overlook the broad bays and creeks that surround Chincoteague. A good way to get out on them is with **Captain Barry's Back Bay Cruises** ★★ (✆ **757/336-6508;** www.captainbarry.net). Barry Frishman moved from New York to Chincoteague and set about learning everything he could about the water and what's in it. Now he shares his knowledge by taking guests out on his pontoon boat for 1½-hour early-morning bird-watching expeditions ($25 per person); 2-hour afternoon "Sea Life Expeditions" ($25 per person); a 4-hour morning or afternoon "Coastal Encounter" in search of crabs, fish, shells, and clams ($45 per person); and champagne sunset cruises ($35). Call for Barry's schedule and reservations, which are required.

FISHING Before it became a tourist mecca, Chincoteague was a fishing village for centuries—and it still is. Both work and pleasure boats prowl the back bays and ocean for flounder, croaker, spot, kingfish, drum, striped bass, bluefish, and sharks, to name a few species.

You can get to it yourself, either from a rented boat or by throwing your line from a dock. For charter boats, equipment, supplies, free tide tables, and advice, check in at **Barnacle Bill's Bait & Tackle** (✆ **757/336-5188**) or **Capt. Bob's** (✆ **757/336-6654**), both on South Main Street.

MUSEUMS

The large airstrip you pass on the way to Chincoteague on Va. 175 is part of NASA's **Wallops Flight Facility,** a research and testing center for rockets, balloons, and aircraft. The facility also tracks NASA's spacecraft and satellites, including the space shuttles. Across the highway is the **NASA Visitor Center** (✆ **757/824-2298;** http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/VC), one of the best places to park the kids on a rainy day. They will get kicks out of seeing a practice space suit from Apollo 9 and watching videos—mysteriously projected onto a sphere—about the moon and the planets. Admission is free. The visitor center is open July 4th through Labor Day daily 10am to 4pm; March through June and September to November Thursday through Monday 10am to 4pm; December to February Monday through Friday 10am to 4pm. The center is 5 miles west of Chincoteague.

On Maddox Boulevard, between the traffic circle and the bridge to Assateague, are two small marine-themed museums. The **Oyster and Maritime Museum** (✆ **757/336-6117**) tells the area's history and the role played by the vital seafood industry from the 1600s to the present, with examples of marine life (some of them live). The highlight is the original lens from the Assateague Lighthouse, which mariners could see 23 miles offshore from 1865 to 1961. The museum is open Memorial Day to Labor Day Monday through Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday noon to 5pm, and on weekends during April, May, September, and October. Admission is free; donations are accepted.

WHERE TO STAY

My friends and I used to rent a cottage when we came to Chincoteague, as it was more economical than a hotel for four or more of us, and we liked having our own kitchen and room to roam around. Among several companies handling cottage rentals are **Chincoteague Resort Realty,** 6378A Church St., Chincoteague Island, VA 23336 (✆ **800/668-7836** or 757/336-3100; www.chincoteagueresort.com), and **Chincoteague Vacation Rentals,** 7038 Maddox Blvd., Chincoteague Island, Virginia 23336 (✆ **757/336-1236;** www.igetaway.net).

Tips Mosquitoes, Mosquitoes & More Mosquitoes

I grew up in coastal North Carolina and thus am accustomed to fighting off my share of mosquitoes, but Chincoteague, Assateague, and Tangier islands set a new standard for slapping, itching, and scratching. The Chincoteague mosquitoes seem more prone to make meals of my blood at dawn and dusk, but the Assateague variety is not nearly so finicky. Neither are the biting horse flies on Assateague, who don't care what time of day they attack! Consequently, I go nowhere here—including the beach—before applying ample insect repellent.

A Side Trip to Onancock

Plan to look around **Onancock** (www.onancock.com), a creekside town about 20 miles south of Chincoteague. Dating to 1680, genteel Onancock has always made its living from farming and trading rather than fishing, and even today its immaculate lawns, gourmet market, boutiques, and art galleries stand in marked contrast to Chincoteague's fishing-town image.

From U.S. 13, take Va. 179 west through town to the docks and **Hopkins & Bro. General Store,** built in 1842 and now home to **Mallards at the Wharf** (✆ **757/787-8558**), a worthy restaurant with water-view tables in warm weather (daily 11:30am–9pm).

Also worth a peek is **Ker Place,** 69 Market St. (Va. 179), a stately Federal mansion built about 1800 and now home to the Eastern Shore of Virginia Historical Society (✆ **757/787-8012;** www.kerplace.org). Admission is $5 adults, $2 children. It's open from March through December, Tuesday through Saturday from 11am to 4pm.

The best place to stay is the **Charlotte Hotel & Restaurant,** 7 North St. (✆ **757/787-7400;** www.thecharlottehotel.com), which has eight rooms upstairs over a very good restaurant serving breakfast and dinner.

Bed-and-breakfasts include **1890 Spinning Wheel B&B** (✆ **888/787-7311;** www.1890spinningwheel.com) and **The Inn at Onancock** (✆ **757/789-7711;** www.innatonancock.com).

Most of Chincoteague's accommodations are small, family-run motels and bed-and-breakfasts. Even the Best Western Chincoteague Island falls into this category (see below). Although not owned by a local family, the **Quality Inn Chincoteague,** 6273 Maddox Blvd. (✆ **800/221-7490** or 757/336-6565; www.chincoteaguequality.com), was until recently the venerable Mariner Motel.

The island's modern, built-to-order chain motels are the **Comfort Suites,** 4195 Main St. (✆ **800/228-5150** or 757/336-3700; fax 757/336-5452; www.chincoteaguechamber.com/comfortsuites), and the **Hampton Inn & Suites,** 4179 Main St. (✆ **800/426-7866** or 757/336-1616; www.hamptoninnsuiteschincoteague.com). They stand next to each other beside Chincoteague Channel in town. Both have heated indoor pools but neither has a restaurant.

As with any summertime beach destination, you will pay the highest rates from mid-June through Labor Day weekend in September, with spikes on July 4th and during the last week in July for the annual pony penning.

Best Western Chincoteague Island Between the traffic circle and the bridge to Assateague Island, this motel—formerly known as the Driftwood Lodge—and the Refuge Inn (see below) are Chincoteague's closest accommodations to the wildlife refuge and national seashore. Entered from the rear, the guest rooms in the gray, three-story shingle-look building all have balconies facing the road (those on the third floor overlook the marshes). Most contain two double beds, tables and chairs, and full tiled bathrooms. The two suites have two bedrooms, one or two bathrooms, whirlpool tubs, and kitchenettes. Owners Scot and Lisa Chesson renovated the entire motel as part of their recent switch

Tips Cruising to Tangier Island

As I said in chapter 6 (p. 116), remote Tangier Island, 14 miles out in the Chesapeake Bay, is one of my favorite places to escape from civilization. You can get there from Crisfield, Maryland, a fishing town about 25 miles north of Chincoteague, with **Tangier Island Cruises** (✆ **800/979-3370** or 410/968-2338; www.tangierislandcruises.com), which depart at 12:30pm daily from May 15 until October 15. The return voyages leave Tangier at 4pm, giving you about 2 hours on the island. Round-trip same day fare is $25 per adult, $12 for children 7 to 12. Add $10 per adult if you stay overnight. Fares are the same on the ***Courtney Thomas*** (✆ **757/891-2240**), also known as "The Mail Boat" because it hauls the U.S. mail. It leaves Tangier at 8am and returns from Crisfield at 12:30pm Monday to Saturday year-round. I usually buy my tickets in advance.

to Best Western. Full breakfast is included in their rates, and the island's McDonald's is across Maddox Boulevard.

7105 Maddox Blvd. (P.O. Box 575), Chincoteague Island, VA 23336. ✆ **800/553-6117** or 757/336-6557. Fax 757/336-6558. www.bestwestern.com/chincoteagueisland. 52 units. $69–$209 double; $139–$229 suite. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. From the bridge, turn left on Main St., right on Maddox Blvd. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, kitchen (suite only), Wi-Fi.

Island Motor Inn Resort ★★ The best-equipped motel here, the inn sits on Chincoteague Channel just north of the business district, giving its spacious rooms great views across the bay to the mainland. Reception is in a three-story building whose rooms are better appointed than the standard units in the older, two- and three-story motel blocks adjoining. Rooms on the ends of this new building have bay windows, giving them two-way views. On the water side of the property, you'll find a 600-foot-long boardwalk and boat dock, a covered barbecue area with hammock for lounging, an outdoor pool, and glass-enclosed indoor pool and fitness center (with a trainer on duty year-round). On the road side, owners Reggie and Anna Stubbs have built a landscaped garden with lily ponds and benches for relaxing. The **Island Cafe** only serves breakfast, but it's exceptionally good (see box below). The minisuites are reserved for adults only.

4391 N. Main St., Chincoteague Island, VA 23336. ✆ **757/336-3141.** Fax 757/336-1483. www.islandmotorinn.com. 60 units. $68–$205 double; $160–$205 suite. AE, DISC, MC, V. From the bridge, turn left on Main St. to motel on left. **Amenities:** Restaurant (breakfast only); health club; Jacuzzi; pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Refuge Inn ★★ Kids This charming motel is, like the Best Western Chincoteague Island across the street (see above), as close to Assateague Island as you can stay. You can see the ponies here, for several live in a small corral on the grounds. Some rooms have country inn–style Colonial pieces. First-floor rooms facing the back have sliding doors to private patios where guests can use outdoor grills. One of the two suites is a one-bedroom apartment with a fully equipped kitchen, a screened porch across the front, a bathroom with whirlpool tub, and a spiral staircase leading to a sleeping loft (the unit can sleep up to six). The suites are rented on a weekly basis in summer. Other facilities include an observation sun deck on the roof, an enclosed pool and whirlpool, and a children's playground. Guests are treated to a continental breakfast with hot waffles.

Virginia's Barrier Islands Center & Museum

Chincoteague and Assateague are but two of Virginia's 23 barrier islands, those long slivers of sand separating the Atlantic Ocean from the bays and backwaters along the eastern seaboard. They are now owned by governments or by organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, which are protecting them in their natural state. People once lived on the islands, and rich and famous folk like President Grover Cleveland came out to hunt and fish. But no more.

The former residents and their water-oriented life-style are fondly remembered at the **Eastern Shore of Virginia Barrier Islands Center & Museum** ★★, on U.S. 13 just north of Machipongo (✆ **757/678-5550;** www.barrierislandscenter.com). That's 20 miles north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, about 55 miles south of Chincoteague. The white-clapboard building looks like a farmhouse standing in the fields beside the highway, but in fact it was built by Northampton County as the Almshouse Farm at Machipongo—a place for poor people to live, in other words. The barrier island residents and their descendants donated the many artifacts on display, and resident historian Jerry Doughty leads 30-minute museum tours twice daily. Admission is free, with donations encouraged. Open Tuesday through Saturday 10am to 4pm, it's well worth a brief stop.

You can cruise through the narrow channels and take a walk on a deserted barrier island beach with Capt. Buddy Vaughn of **Eastern Shore Adventures** (✆ **757/615-2598;** www.easternshoreadventures.com), whose wife, Laura Vaughn, is director of the Barrier Islands Center & Museum. Call Buddy well in advance to make arrangements.

7058 Maddox Blvd., Chincoteague Island, VA 23336. ✆ **888/868-6400** or 757/336-5511. Fax 757/336-6134. www.refugeinn.com. 72 units. $80–$170 double; $160–$285 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Bikes; children's playground; Jacuzzi; pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, kitchen (suites only), Wi-Fi.

Waterside Motor Inn ★ All the accommodations at Tommy and Donna Mason's three-story motel feature private wooden balconies overlooking Chincoteague Channel, guaranteeing some breathtaking sunset views, especially on the end units directly facing the water (they're worth requesting). Shingle-look siding gives the property a Victorian appearance. The spacious units are decorated in comfortable contemporary style, and some have a king- or queen-size bed and a pullout sofa bed. Four suites in a nearby Victorian house have two bedrooms and kitchens. The Waterside has an outdoor pool with deck and its own fishing and crabbing pier. The complimentary continental breakfast includes made-to-order waffles.

3761 Main St. (P.O. Box 347), Chincoteague Island, VA 23336. ✆ **877/870-3434** or 757/336-3434. Fax 757/336-1878. www.watersidemotorinn.com. 49 units. $90–$205 double; $105–$225 suite. Rates include breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. At the bridge entering Chincoteague, turn right; the motel is on the right, about ½ mile from the bridge. **Amenities:** Health club; Jacuzzi; pool; tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Bed & Breakfasts

Chincoteague has several bed-and-breakfasts, including **Cedar Gables Seaside Inn,** 6905 Hopkins Lane (✆ **888/491-2944** or 757/336-1096; www.cedargable.com), with a screened outdoor swimming pool and a master suite with climb-up cupola rendering a 360-degree view of the marshes north of town.

In the village are **Inn at Poplar Corner,** 4248 Main St. (✆ 877/336-6111 or 757/336-6115; www.innatpoplarcorner.com), where I'm especially fond of the Main View room and its balcony overlooking Main Street and Chincoteague Channel; **1848 Island Manor House,** 4160 Main St. (✆ 800/852-1505 or 757/336-5436; www.islandmanor.com), which consists of two houses joined by a charming guest lounge; **The Watson House,** 4240 Main St. (✆ 800/336-6787 or 757/336-1564; www.watsonhouse.com); **The Channel Bass Inn,** 6228 Church St. (✆ 800/249-0818 or 757/336-6148; www.channelbassinn.com); and **Miss Molly's Inn,** 4141 Main St. (✆ 800/221-5620 or 757/336-6686; www.missmollys-inn.com).

WHERE TO DINE

You won't find fine dining here but you will be served seafood fresh from the boat. The famous Chincoteague oysters are harvested September to March. The area is also known for flounder, caught year-round. Most Chincoteague restaurants, however, are seasonal operations and close from October until Easter weekend the following spring.

In addition to those below, also open year-round are the venerable **Bill's Seafood Restaurant,** 4040 Main St. (✆ **757/336-5831**), which opens daily at 5am to feed breakfast to the watermen headed to work, and **Don's Seafood Restaurant and Chattie's Lounge,** 4113 Main St. (✆ **747/336-5715**), which opens daily at 7am. Don's upstairs Chattie's Lounge has live or DJ music on weekend nights.

AJ's on the Creek ★ SEAFOOD/STEAKS The island's most romantic restaurant, AJ's offers dining either on a screened-in patio beside a narrow creek or inside, where candles and dried-flower arrangements adorn a mix of tables and booths. Most romantic of all is table no. 20 in a private corner; it's worth a wait. The menu offers a mix of Italian-style pastas—Chincoteague oysters in a champagne cream sauce is a house specialty—and traditional dishes such as fried or steamed shrimp and oysters, plus char-grilled steaks. A popular local hangout, the friendly bar offers sports TVs and its own snack menu (with money-saving half-sizes of regular menu main courses). It has live music on weekends.

6585 Maddox Blvd. ✆ **757/336-5888.** Reservations recommended, especially for table no. 20. Main courses $14–$29. AE, MC, V. Summer Mon–Sat 11:30am–9pm (lounge until 1am); winter Mon–Sat 11:30am–2pm and 5–9pm.

Tips Best Breakfast in Chincoteague

The best breakfast place in town is the **Island Cafe,** a cottage in front of the Island Motor Inn, 4391 Main St. (✆ **757/336-3141**). The front porch is ideal for enjoying the chef's specialty, French toast laced with Grand Marnier, Amaretto, and Bailey's Irish Cream. Prices range from $6 to $12. Open daily 6:30am to noon in summer, to 11am off season.

Chincoteague Inn/P.T. Pelican's Intercoastal Deck Bar SEAFOOD Sitting beside the channel, the Chincoteague Inn has been a mainstay here for generations, offering traditional preparations and fine water views from big window walls. The delicately seasoned crab cakes with large lumps of back fin meat are the best meal here. But the fun part of this establishment is outside at P.T. Pelican's rustic and funky deck bar beside Chincoteague Channel. I hang out here because it's the only place in town to sip a cold drink while watching the sun set over the marshes and mainland. The all-day bar menu features burgers, crab cake sandwiches, soft-shell crabs, steamed or raw oysters and clams on the half shell, and shrimp and crab salads. It can be noisy out here on summer weekend nights when bands make music for dancing.

6262 Marlin St. (off Main St., south of the bridge). ✆ **757/336-6110.** Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches and salads $6–$9; main courses $15–$27. MC, V. Easter to mid-Oct, deck bar daily 11am–10pm, dining room daily 4–9pm. Closed mid-Oct to Easter.

Mr. Baldy's Family Restaurant Finds SEAFOOD Owned by the very bald Robert Zoller, who relocated his family here from Hoboken, New Jersey, this lively family-style restaurant serves a variety of fare, most of it made from fresh ingredients. The day begins with traditional breakfasts and moves on to a variety of salads and sandwiches, including soft-shell crabs and very good crab cakes made the traditional Chesapeake way with back fin meat and a touch of Old Bay seasoning. Main courses also include soft shells and crab cakes plus oysters, shrimp, flounder, steaks, and a few pastas. All in all, it's very good value. No alcoholic beverages are served.

3447 Ridge Rd. (in middle of the island). ✆ **757/336-1198.** Reservations not accepted. Breakfast $3–$6; sandwiches and salads $5–$9; main courses $8–$19. MC, V. Daily 6:30am–9:30pm (to 8pm in winter).

The Sea Shell Cafe Finds SEAFOOD Next to the Best Western Chincoteague Island, this restaurant introduced a bit of refined dining to the island when it opened in 2008. It appears to be just another family restaurant at lunch, but tablecloths and silver settings add refinement at night. You can start with tapas, such as the chef's version of oysters Rockefeller, and move on to pastas, one of which features rockfish in a white wine, basil, and sun-dried tomato sauce. Most of the seafood selections are the usual fried or broiled platters. I would opt for the crab cakes made with no filler—that is, no breading, just the tasty back fin meat. I was impressed with the coleslaw, made here with a light ginger sauce instead of mayonnaise; it was much more like a French cabbage salad.

7085 Maddox Blvd. ✆ **757/336-6005.** www.theseashellcafe.com. Reservations recommended. Sandwiches $8–$10; main courses $15–$23. AE, DISC, MC, V. Summer daily 11:30am–9pm. Call for off-season hours.

Sea Star Cafe ★ Finds LIGHT FARE I've never had fresher or tastier food on Chincoteague than the tabbouleh wrap and spinach salad I devoured at a picnic table at this little takeaway, in a parking lot on Main Street. There are no indoor tables; in fact, the tiny building has just enough room for the two cooks to work their magic without bumping into each other. Written on a blackboard nailed to the outside wall, the menu depends on what those cooks found at the market or farms over on the mainland. Whatever sandwiches or salads they offer, they will be crispy and very good. Vegetarians and vegans will have their taste buds tingled here, too.

4121 Main St. ✆ **757/336-5442.** Reservations not accepted. Most items $5.50–$7. No credit cards. Mon–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 11am–4pm. Closed Tues off season.

Village Restaurant SEAFOOD Across Maddox Boulevard from AJ's on the Creek, the gardenlike Village Restaurant enjoys a fine view over a creek and a marsh. The specialties are traditionally prepared seafood such as fried or broiled oysters, flounder, and shrimp. The house seafood platter is piled with fish filet, shrimp, scallops, oysters, clams, and lobster tail. Nonseafood main dishes include veal or chicken Parmesan, fried chicken, and filet mignon.

6576 Maddox Blvd. ✆ **757/336-5120.** Reservations recommended. Main courses $12–$29. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 5–9pm. Closed 1 weekday in the off season and most of Jan–Feb.

13 Fast Facts: Virginia

AREA CODES Virginia has several area codes. The **703** and **571** codes are both in northern Virginia and the eastern Hunt Country, where you must dial both the area code and local number even when calling locally. The **540** code runs from Fredericksburg west to Winchester and south to Roanoke. The **804** code is in Richmond, Petersburg, and the Northern Neck. The **757** code covers Williamsburg, Hampton Roads, and the Eastern Shore. The **434** code is in Charlottesville. And the **276** code is in the Southwest Highlands.

AUTOMOBILE ORGANIZATIONS Motor clubs will supply maps, suggested routes, guidebooks, accident and bail-bond insurance, and emergency road service. The **American Automobile Association (AAA)** is the major auto club in the United States. If you belong to a motor club in your home country, inquire about AAA reciprocity before you leave. You may be able to join AAA even if you're not a member of a reciprocal club; to inquire, call AAA (✆ **800/222-4357;** www.aaa.com). AAA has a nationwide emergency road service telephone number (✆ 800/AAA-HELP [222-4357]).

BUSINESS HOURS Offices are usually open weekdays 9am to 5pm. Banks are open weekdays 9am to 3pm or later and sometimes Saturday mornings. Stores typically open between 9 and 10am and close between 5 and 6pm Monday through Saturday. Stores in shopping complexes or malls tend to stay open late on these days—until about 9pm—and many malls and larger department stores are open until 6pm on Sundays.

DRINKING LAWS The legal age for purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages is 21; proof of age is required and often requested at bars, nightclubs, and restaurants, so it's always a good idea to bring ID when you go out. In Virginia, many grocery and convenience stores sell beer and wine, but only state-licensed Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) stores are permitted to sell bottles of hard liquor. Any licensed establishment (restaurant or bar) can sell drinks by the glass. Bars must close by 2am. Do not carry open containers of alcohol in your car or any public area that isn't zoned for alcohol consumption. The police can fine you on the spot. And nothing will ruin your trip faster than getting a citation for DUI ("driving under the influence"), so don't even think about driving while intoxicated.

DRIVING RULES See "Getting There & Getting Around," in chapter 3.

ELECTRICITY Like Canada, the United States uses 110 to 120 volts AC (60 cycles), compared to 220 to 240 volts AC (50 cycles) in most of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Downward converters that change 220–240 volts to 110–120 volts are difficult to find in the United States, so bring one with you.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES All embassies are located in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Some consulates are located in major U.S. cities, and most nations have a mission to the United

Nations in New York City. If your country isn't listed below, call for directory information in Washington, D.C. (✆ **202/555-1212**) or check **www.embassy.org/embassies**.

The embassy of **Australia** is at 1601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036 (✆ **202/797-3000;** usa.embassy.gov/au).

The embassy of **Canada** is at 501 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001 (✆ **202/682-1740;** www.canadianembassy.org). Other Canadian consulates are in Buffalo, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York City, and Seattle.

The embassy of **Ireland** is at 2234 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (✆ **202/462-3939;** www.irelandemb.org). Irish consulates are in Boston, Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, and other cities. See website for complete listing.

The embassy of **New Zealand** is at 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008 (✆ **202/328-4800;** www.nzembassy.com). New Zealand consulates are in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Seattle.

The embassy of the **United Kingdom** is at 3100 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (✆ **202/588-7800;** www.britainusa.com). Other British consulates are in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, and Seattle.

EMERGENCIES Call ✆ **911** to report a fire, call the police, or get an ambulance anywhere in the United States. This is a toll-free call (no coins are required at public telephones). Dial ✆ **#77** on your cellphone to reach the state highway patrol.

GASOLINE (PETROL) Petrol is known as gasoline (or simply "gas"), and petrol stations are known as both gas stations and service stations. Like elsewhere in the world, gasoline prices have fluctuated widely in the past few years. It is around $2.50 a gallon in Virginia as I write. Whatever the price here, it still costs about half as much in the U.S. as it does in Europe. Taxes are already included in the printed price. One U.S. gallon equals 3.8 liters or .85 imperial gallons. All but a few stations have self-service gas pumps.

HOLIDAYS Banks, government offices, post offices, and many stores, restaurants, and museums are closed on the following legal national holidays: January 1 (New Year's Day), the third Monday in January (Martin Luther King, Jr., Day), the third Monday in February (Presidents' Day), the last Monday in May (Memorial Day), July 4 (Independence Day), the first Monday in September (Labor Day), the second Monday in October (Columbus Day), November 11 (Veterans' Day/Armistice Day), the fourth Thursday in November (Thanksgiving Day), and December 25 (Christmas). The Tuesday after the first Monday in November is Election Day, a federal government holiday in presidential-election years (held every 4 years, and next in 2012).

For more information on holidays see "Virginia Calendar of Events," in chapter 3.

INSURANCE Visitors from outside the United States should consider buying travel insurance, especially a policy providing medical coverage while you are here. Unlike many European countries, the United States does not usually offer free or low-cost medical care to its citizens or visitors. Doctors and hospitals are expensive, and in most cases will require advance payment or proof of coverage before they render their services. Good policies will cover the costs of an accident, repatriation, or death.

Packages such as **Europ Assistance's "Worldwide Healthcare Plan"** are sold by European automobile clubs and travel agencies at attractive rates. **Worldwide Assistance Services, Inc.** (✆ **800/777-8710;** www.worldwideassistance.com) is the agent for Europ Assistance in the United States.

Canadians should check with their provincial health plan offices or call **Health Canada** (✆ **866/225-0709;** www.hc-sc.gc.ca) to find out the extent of their coverage and what documentation and receipts they must take home in case they are treated in the United States.

INTERNET ACCESS See "Staying Connected," in chapter 3.

LANGUAGE English is the common language in the United States, although Spanish is spoken by millions of immigrants from South and Central America.

LEGAL AID If you are "pulled over" for a minor infraction (such as speeding), never attempt to pay the fine directly to a police officer; this could be construed as attempted bribery, a much more serious crime. Pay fines by mail, or directly into the hands of the clerk of the court. If accused of a more serious offense, say and do nothing before consulting a lawyer. Here the burden is on the state to prove a person's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and everyone has the right to remain silent, whether suspected of a crime or actually arrested. Once arrested, a person can make one telephone call to a party of his or her choice. International visitors should call their embassy or consulate.

MAIL At press time, domestic postage rates were 28¢ for a postcard and 44¢ for a letter. For international mail, a first-class letter of up to 1 ounce costs 98¢ (75¢ to Canada and 79¢ to Mexico); a first-class postcard costs the same as a letter. For more information go to **www.usps.com**.

If you aren't sure what your address will be in the United States, mail can be sent to you, in your name, c/o General Delivery at the main post office of the city or region where you expect to be. (Call ✆ **800/275-8777** for information on the nearest post office.) The addressee must pick up mail in person and must produce proof of identity (driver's license, passport, and so forth). Most post offices will hold your mail for up to 1 month, and are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, and Saturday from 9am to 3pm.

Always include zip codes when mailing items in the U.S. If you don't know your zip code, visit www.usps.com/zip4.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES Each major city in Virginia has its own daily newspaper. The ***Richmond Times-Dispatch*** (www.timesdispatch.com), ***The Roanoke Times*** (www.roanoke.com), and the Norfolk ***Virginian-Pilot*** (www.pilotonline.com) are the largest. The ***Washington Post*** (www.washingtonpost.com) and ***USA Today*** (www.usatoday.com) are available at newsstands and coin boxes throughout the state.

PASSPORTS See "Embassies & Consulates," above, for whom to contact if you lose your passport while traveling in the U.S. For other information and to obtain a passport, please contact the following agencies:

For Residents of Australia Contact the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ✆ **131-232,** or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada Contact the central **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (✆ **800/567-6868;** www.ppt.gc.ca).

For Residents of Ireland Contact the **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (✆ **01/671-1633;** www.irlgov.ie/iveagh).

For Residents of New Zealand Contact the **Passports Office** at ✆ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

For Residents of the United Kingdom Visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** at ✆ **0870/521-0410** or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

For Residents of the United States To find your regional passport office, or a U.S. post office which accepts applications, either check the U.S. State Department website or call the **National Passport Information Center** toll-free number (✆ **877/487-2778**) for automated information.

POLICE To reach the police in an emergency, dial ✆ **911** from any phone (no charge).

SMOKING Virginia has come a long way since the days when tobacco was the backbone of its economy, and its legislators steadfastly refused to enact anti-smoking laws. It is now illegal to smoke in public buildings in Virginia, including restaurants and bars unless they have a smoking room with its own ventilation system. As is true throughout the United States, you must be at least 18 years old to purchase tobacco products.

TAXES The Virginia state sales tax is 5% for most purchases plus 2% on hotel rooms. Local hotel taxes vary; in most communities it's 5%, which makes the total tax on your hotel bill at least 12%. Most local jurisdictions also add a restaurant tax, which jacks up the price of food and drink by 10% or more.

The United States has no value-added tax (VAT) or other indirect tax at the national level. Every state, county, and city may levy its own local tax on all purchases, including hotel and restaurant checks and airline tickets. These taxes will not appear on price tags.

TELEPHONES See "Staying Connected," in chapter 3.

TIME The continental United States is divided into **four time zones:** Eastern Standard Time (EST), Central Standard Time (CST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), and Pacific Standard Time (PST). Alaska and Hawaii have their own zones.

Virginia is on Eastern Standard Time, the same as New York City and other East Coast cities. For example, when it's noon in Richmond, it's 11am in Chicago (CST), 10am in Denver (MST), 9am in Los Angeles (PST), it's 7am in Honolulu (HST), 5pm in London (GMT), and 2am the next day in Sydney.

Daylight saving time is in effect from 1am on the second Sunday in March to 1am on the first Sunday in November, except in Arizona, Hawaii, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Daylight saving time moves the clock 1 hour ahead of standard time.

TIPPING Tips are a very important part of certain workers' income, and gratuities are the standard way of showing appreciation for services provided. (Tipping is certainly not compulsory if the service is poor!)

In hotels, tip **bellhops** at least $1 per bag ($2–$3 if you have a lot of luggage) and tip the **chamber staff** $1 to $2 per day (more if you've left a disaster area for him or her to clean up). Tip the **doorman** or **concierge** only if he or she has provided you with some specific service (for example, calling a cab for you or obtaining difficult-to-get theater tickets). Tip the **valet-parking attendant** $1 every time you get your car.

In restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, tip **service staff** and **bartenders** 15% to 20% of the check, tip **checkroom attendants** $1 per garment, and tip **valet-parking attendants** $1 per vehicle.

As for other service personnel, tip **cab drivers** 15% of the fare; tip **skycaps** at airports at least $1 per bag ($2–$3 if you have a lot of luggage); and tip **hairdressers** and **barbers** 15% to 20%.

TOILETS You won't find public toilets or "restrooms" on the streets in most U.S. cities but they can be found in hotel lobbies, bars, restaurants, museums, department stores, railway and bus stations, and service stations. Large hotels and fast-food restaurants are often the best bet for clean

Tips Dial 511 for Info

You can dial ✆ **511** from anywhere in Virginia and receive up-to-date travel, traffic, and weather information.

facilities. Restaurants and bars in resorts or heavily visited areas may reserve their restrooms for patrons.

VISAS See "Entry Requirements," in chapter 3.

VISITOR INFORMATION Each city and town has a visitor information office. I list contact information for these offices in the destination chapters.

The best source for statewide information is the **Virginia Tourism Corporation,** 901 E. Byrd St. (P.O. Box 798), Richmond, VA 23219 (✆ **800/847-4882** or 804/786-2051; fax 804/786-1919; www.virginia.org). It publishes or distributes a host of information, including a statewide travel planner; official state highway maps (including the state's "Civil War Trails" and a very useful "scenic byways" map highlighting the state's many beautiful routes); lists of hotels, motels, country inns, and bed-and-breakfasts; an outdoor guide to the state; a golf directory; a biking guide; a state park directory; a list of Virginia wineries and wine festivals; and a guide for travelers with disabilities. Most are available on, or can be ordered from, its website.

A good regional source is **www.visithamptonroads.com**, operated by the Hampton Roads Partnership and covering Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Hampton, Newport News, the Williamsburg area, and other localities in southeastern Virginia.

Another is the **Shenandoah Valley Travel Association,** 277 W. Old Cross Rd. (P.O. Box 1040), New Market, VA 22844 (✆ **877/847-4878** or 540/740-3131; www.visitshenandoah.org), which covers the valley from Winchester to Lexington.

The **National Geographic Society** (www.nationalgeographic.com/maps) publishes excellent maps of Shenandoah National Park (map no. 228) and of Mount Rogers National Recreation Area (no. 786).

I'm an ardent reader of ***Virginia Living*** (www.virginialiving.com), a slick lifestyle magazine published bimonthly in Richmond. Its compilation of festivals and events is comprehensive.

I post updates to the information in this book on my personal website, **www.billgoodwin.com**.

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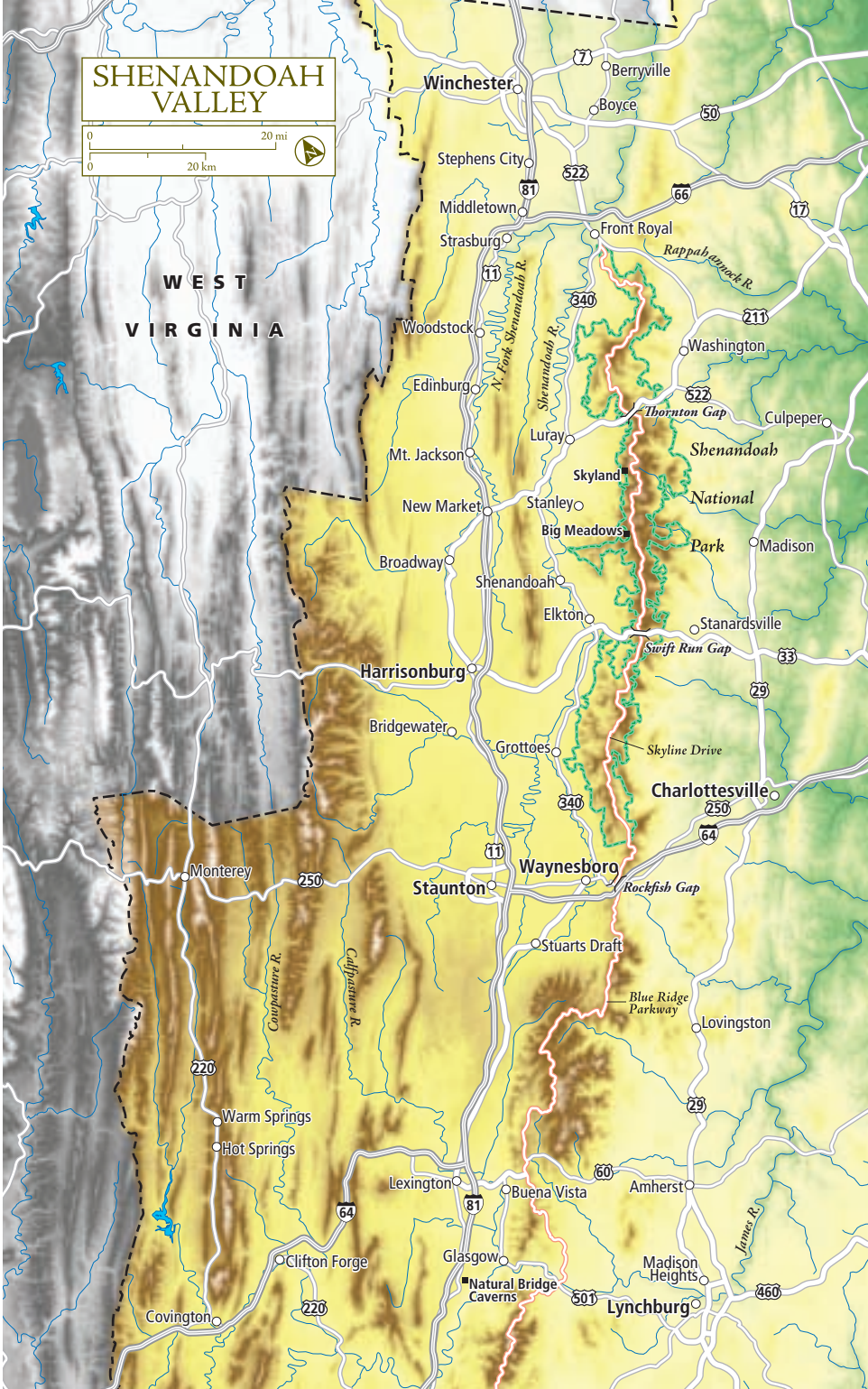
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Stanley
New Market
Big Meadows
Madison
Broadway
Shenandoah
Elkton
Stanardsville
Swift Run Gap
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Grottoes
Skyline Drive
Charlottesville
Waynesboro
Rockfish Gap
Monterey
Staunton
Stuarts Draft
Blue Ridge Parkway
Lovingston
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Calfpasture R.
Warm Springs
Hot Springs
Lexington
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Glasgow
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